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2

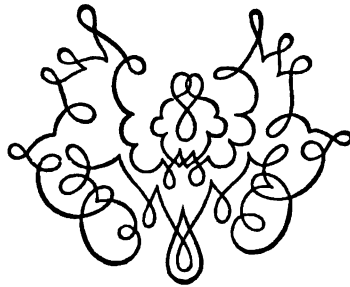
THE GEORGICS OF VIRGIL

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THE GEORGICS OF VIRGIL

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

BY LORD BURGHCLERE



SECOND EDITION

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET

1905

Lv 739.05

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JOHN H. GARDNER

PREFACE

WHETHER the didactic or the poetic spirit chiefly inspired Virgil in his *Georgics* is to the modern reader a matter of modest concern. Possibly Augustus, as he listened to the stately hexameters which Virgil and Maecenas read aloud to him at Atella, welcomed the popularity of the poem as an incentive to bring "back to the land" and to the manly life of the rural districts those ancient yeomen, whom agricultural depression, tempered by *panem et circenses*, had in past years collected at Rome. Undoubtedly, I think, he hailed with delight this triumph of Virgil's genius as a significant exemplar of that native literature which Roman thinkers and Roman writers had so long desired. To us latter-day students of the great master there is need for no such esoteric criticism, and we contentedly accept the most complete of Latin classics as a supreme model of harmony in rhythm and dignity in diction.

The *Georgics*, as their Greek name γεωργικά implies, mainly treat of matters pertaining to husbandry and

the cultivation of the soil. The prosaic science of the farmyard would not at first sight seem to present a promising basis for the poet's art. Yet Virgil undertook the task with evident pleasure, and accomplished it with an ease that is the despair of his translators. Nor can it be said that he shrinks in any way from the difficulties in his path. He attacks the commonplaces of the subject with equal courage and success. He deals with the ordinary methods of tillage and forestry, of cattle-breeding and bee-keeping, with an abundant detail and an almost scientific precision. And never once does his verse lose its exalted character; never once does his style sink from the grand into the grandiose. He uses that most perfect of poetical instruments, the Latin hexameter, with consummate art. He makes it discourse melody with the skill of a master musician. In one passage its rolling harmonies conjure up the clang and crash of the mountain storm, the rush and roar of the flooding torrent, the thunders of Jove himself. In another fauns, nymphs, and all the citizens of Arcady pass across sunny lawns and forest glades to the lighter measure of his strains.

PREFACE

7

In nothing is he common, in nothing is he incomplete. Everywhere the sense is allied to the rhythm—the rhythm to the sense. Truly is he, as Tennyson sang, a “Lord of Language,” in whose marvellous verse-pictures we find

“All the charm of all the Muses
Often flowering in a lonely word.”

The present translation, begun amidst the bustle of the House of Commons, and completed in the calm of a Highland lodge, owes no small debt of gratitude to various distinguished critics. Of these, my special thanks are due to the Rev. A. J. Church, late Professor of Latin in University College, London, whose kindly supervision of the first two books largely prompted me to proceed with the work; to Sir Alfred Lyall, for many helpful suggestions and invaluable comments; and last, but not least, to Mr. Edmund Gosse, whose friendly advice has aided and encouraged me throughout the whole of my task. Certain portions of each book have at various periods appeared in the *Nineteenth Century and After* magazine, and I have to thank its Editor, Sir James Knowles, for permission to reproduce them on the

present occasion. The complete volume is now published for the first time; and in submitting it with considerable diffidence to the judgment of the public I would merely add that, should it be fortunate enough to induce some chance reader to turn from an imperfect English rendering to a closer study of the inimitable original, it will have amply accomplished its mission. B.

ACHALADER HOUSE, PERTHSHIRE

October 20th, 1904

P.S.—I have taken the opportunity of a second edition to correct a few verbal errors, and to meet some suggestions as to closer translations which, in one or two instances, have been made by my lenient critics of the public press. Otherwise, the present issue is identical in all ways with the former volume. B.

LONDON

May 19th, 1905

BOOK I

THE GEORGICS OF VIRGIL

BOOK I

THE art of ample harvests ; what glad star
Sanctions the timely tillage of the soil
And bids the marriage of the elm and vine :
The care of beeves, the charge of teeming flocks,
The wisdom needed for the thrifty hive ;
Such, O Maecenas, is the song I sing.

Aid me, ye glorious lights of heaven who guide
Along the firmament the passing year,
Bacchus and bounteous Ceres, since your boons
Changed the Chaonian diet of the world

To ears of lusty corn, and found and blent
The clustered grape in Acheloan cups.

And ye, O Fauns, the rustics' patron gods,
O Fauns and Dryad maids, come hand-in-hand
What time your gifts I sing.

And, Neptune, thou
Who erst with mighty trident smotest earth
And lo ! the horse leaped neighing from her side.

Come, Master of the glades, for whose delight
In Ceos' Isle three hundred snow-white steers
Crop the lush brake.

And very Pan himself,
Guardian of flocks, I supplicate. O thou,
Divine Arcadian ! Quit thy woodland home,
Thy valleys of Lycaeus : by the love
Thou bearest to thy Maenalus I pray
Thy gracious presence.

Come, Minerva, thou
The olive-maker,

And the boy who first
Taught us the curved plough's use,
Sylvanus too
Unearth and bear thy youngling cypresses.

And all ye host of heaven, whose loving care
Defends our fields—or ye who watch the birth
Of wilding fruits unsown by man, or ye
Who loose the bounteous floodgates of the sky
On cultured glebe—Gods ! Goddesses ! I call.

And thee, O Caesar—who shalt sit a god
Enthroned with gods—though thy appointed place
Be yet unknown—whether thou wilt assume
The governance of cities and the care
Of continents, while, round about thy brow
Binding thy mother's myrtle, the great globe
Acclaims thee sire of harvests and the lord
Of sun and shower :

Or whether thou wilt come
God of the boundless sea whose shrine supreme

The sailor-folk adore, whilst far-away
 Thule obeys thy nod, and Tethys counts
 Her child and all her wealth of billows cheap
 To win thy kinship.

Or perchance shalt thou,
 As some strange Star ruling the lazy months,
 Shine forth from heaven where now the Scorpion's
 claws

Stretch to Erigone. Lo ! he betimes
 Withdraws his fiery grasp and yields thee up
 A generous space of sky more than thy meed.

Whiche'er thou wilt—for surely Tartarus
 Is hopeless of thy reign, nor thou thyself
 Consumed with such fell lust of power (although
 True 'tis the Greeks vaunt their Elysian fields,
 And Proserpine for all her mother's prayers
 Clung to the world below)—whiche'er thou wilt,
 O make my pathway smooth, and deign to bless
 My rash emprise ; and, pitying with me
 These husbandmen who wander leaderless,

Stay not thy coming, but put on the god,
And school thine ears to mortal litanies.

When springtime comes and brings the warm west
wind,
When from the hoary-headed mountain streams
The molten ice, and all the clodded fields
Crumble and thaw, then let my plough be set
Deep in the tilth, my straining oxen groan,
And stubborn furrows make the ploughshare flame
With a new splendour.

Best that land rewards
Your thrifty farmer's vow which twice the sun
And twice the frost has felt. For him forthwith
Shall be a mighty garnering and his barns
Bursting with grain.

But first our care must be,
Or ever we would drive the iron share
Athwart the glebe in some new plain, to learn
What winds are wont to blow ; the character
And variance of the skies ; the ancient arts

Thus in a shift of seeds your lands may take
Rest as in idleness, nor cease the while,
As fallows must, their grateful recompense.

And often you will find it well to burn
The garnered fields and set the flimsy straw
A-crackling in the flames. Whether perchance
The land in this wise finds some unknown force,
Some fat enrichment ; or that every fault
Thereof is purified by fire and all
The useless humours purged ; or that the heat
By its own virtue loosens secret pores
And paths unseen whereby the sap may flow
To the young grasses ; or, it may be, binds
Firmer the earth, and knits the gaping veins,
Lest showers should subtly harm, or the fierce sun
With a too passionate majesty consume,
Or the bleak north winds sear with piercing cold.

Who with his mattock breaks the sleepy clods
And harrows them with hurdles osier-twined

Shall largely serve the land ; nor such a one
Does golden Ceres with indifference eye
From her Olympian heights ; he too does well
Who drives the furrow through the glebe and then
With a cross-ploughing cleaves the up-turned plain,
And tireless disciplines the ground, and rules
Right royally his fields.

Pray, husbandmen,
For summer showers and tranquil winter-time ;
The dust of winter days shall fill the land
With joy, and with a joy most great the corn ;
Never shall Mysia vaunt her tilth so high
And even Gargarus look with wonderment
Upon his granaries.

And what of him
Who hurls the seed, and soldier-wise pursues
The onslaught, grappling the soil, and scattering
The masses of lean sand ? Then to his crop
Summons the flood and leads the attendant rills,
So when the burning fields are all aglow
And the herb meet to die, see ! from the brink

Of its steep path he woos the watercourse.
Hither it tumbles hoarsely murmurous
And wakes the way-worn stones and, bubbling on,
Quenches the thirsty plain.

Or him again

Who, lest beneath the over-laden ears
The haulms be bowed, crops the rank herbage down
In its young leaf, what time the tender growth
First tops the trenches :

Or of him who strives

With bibulous sand to suck the stagnant ooze
Out of the marsh, and finds his special task
When in some changeful moon the rivers rise
In turbulent flood, till far and wide the slime
Covers the land, and all the channelled dikes
Sweat with a faint warm reek?

Yet after all,

Ply as we may our arts, toil as we may,
Both man and beast, till and re-till the ground,
No jot the less do we endure the plague
Of the Strymonian crane or noxious goose,

Or bitter-rooted endive, or the bane
Chill shadows cast around.

So hath he willed,
The great All-father, that we husbandmen
Might tread no easy path, since he it was
Who earliest woke the meadows with our craft,
And made our cares the whetstone of our wits,
Nor suffered drowsy sloth to dull his realm.

Before Jove reigned no farmer tilled the soil ;
Nor was it meet to set a landmark up
And part the plain. Men sought but common ends ;
And mother earth with freer hand unasked
Gave of all things to all.

Then Jove bestowed
A baleful venom on the sable snake.
He bade the wolf to prowl, the sea to rise ;
He shook their dewdrop honey from the leaves,
And hid the fire, and curbed the common flow
Of rivers running wine : and this he did
That necessary custom slow and sure

Should forge the diverse arts by dint of thought,
And in the furrows find the springing corn,
And strike the spark that lurks in living flint.

Then first the hollowed alder smote the flood ;
And sailors told the number of the stars
And called them by their names : the Pleiades,
The Hyads, and Lycaon's flaming Bears.
Then did men learn the art of snaring game,
The trick of bird-lime, and with circling hounds
To ring wide forest glades. And these cast nets
Where the pools deepen in the spacious stream,
While these trailed dripping meshes in the sea.
Then came cold iron and the saw's shrill blade,
Since man till then with wedges clove his logs.

Such the procession of the various crafts.
For toil—relentless toil—is lord of all,
And want and trouble ever prick us on.

But when the day came that the holy groves
Failed of their acorn and their arbutus,

So that Dodona's self denied us food,
Ceres it was who taught the human-folk
How first with iron share to till the land.

Yet straightway trouble falls upon the wheat ;
A plague of mildew eats up all the straw,
And wastrel thistles through the fields uprear
Their horrent spikes. The crops begin to die ;
Along the ground there creeps a tangled growth
Of caltrops, cleavers, and their kind. Then up,
Lording it o'er the glittering harvest, spring
Harsh darnels and wild barren oats.

And thus,

Unless you chase the weeds with constant hoe,
And scare the birds, and prune the darkening shade,
And with your prayers draw showers from heaven—
alas !

Your lot shall be with vainly covetous eye
To watch your neighbours pile their ricks, and then
Go fill your empty belly in the woods
Under the shaken oaks.

Now must I tell
What weapons our stout husbandmen should use,
Since without tools no seed-time can there be
Nor harvest-time.

First have we, then, the plough,
With frame of toughest timber bent, the share,
The wains of Ceres with their lumbering wheels,
And sleds, and drags, and hugh unwieldy rakes ;
Nor Celeus with his equipage forget
Plain wicker though it be, and harrows knit
With arbute-wood, and thy mysterious fan,
Iacchus !

Whoso worthily would win
And wear the glory of the sacred fields,
All these should mind in ample time to store.

Now in the forest bend the living elm
With thy full vigour, beam-wise moulding it
Into the curved shape of a plough ; and fit
Hard-by its end a pole eight feet in length, .

Twin earth-boards, and a share-stock double-backed.
But first the linden must be felled to form
Your lightsome yoke, the lofty beech your helve
Whereby the plough's deep courses may be steered ;
And beech and linden hang above the hearth
So that their woods may season in the smoke.

Full many an ancient maxim can I tell
An you budge not, nor deem it petty work
Too irksome to be learned.

And first, forsooth,
Make smooth with cylinders of mighty bulk,
Your threshing-floor ; let it be wrought by hand
And knit with potter's clay right solidly,
Lest weeds creep through, and so the crumbling soil
Wear into cracks and chinks, and furnish sport
For all our plagues in turn. The tiny mouse
Burrows full oft her subterranean home
And builds her granaries : the purblind mole
Shall scrape her bed : or in his cave you'll find

The toad, and all the monstrous spawn of earth ;
Nor shall your ample store of corn escape
The weevil's havock, or the ant who dreads
A treasure-less old age.

Hearken again

When you shall mark the almond in the woods
Pranked with a myriad blooms, its branches bent
Heavy with fragrance, and the baby fruits
Wax plentiful, lo ! then shall come to pass
A harvest of like fashion, and a time
Of mighty heat and mighty winnowing ;
But if the wealth of shade be wealth of leaves
And leaves alone, then shall you vainly smite
Your threshing-floor and find the gravid ears
Yield naught but empty chaff.

And many a time

I have seen farmers drug the seeds they sow,
Steep them in nitre and black olive-lees,
That by-and-by the else-delusive pods

May bear right ample burden, and a fruit
Which cooks apace, e'en though your fires be
scant.

Yet can I witness that the plant declines,
Though long-time chosen, conned with utmost care,
If human energy and human hands
Fail to search out the fittest year by year.

So are we doomed to speed from bad to worse,
Ever borne backwards, drifting whence we came,
As one whose oars can scarcely hold his boat
Against the stream, who haply slacks his grip,
Then headlong down the torrent is he swept
By the mid-flood.

And list ye well to watch
Arcturus' star, the Birthday of the Kids,
The shining Snake, with eyes as keen as those
Of homing mariners whose stormy course
Hazards the Euxine and the narrow straits
Of oyster-famed Abydos.

When the Scales
With equal poise have meted day and sleep
And cleft the round world in twin moieties
Of light and shade, then up, my masters, up
And speed your steers, and barley broadcast fling
E'en to the verge of winter's surly storms.

Now is the time to sow your crops of flax
And Ceres' poppy, and full time to strain
Over your ploughs, while yet dry earth permits
And clouds unbroken float across the sky.
Spring is the seed-time of the bean ; in spring
The ripened furrows welcome Media's plant,
And millet claims our yearly care, what time
Comes with his golden horns the silver Bull
And opes the year's procession, and the Dog
Faces the hostile Star and ceding sinks.
But if you tax your soil for hardy spelt
And wheaten harvests, and your zeal be set
On corn alone, then let the Pleiades
Melt with the dawn, and Ariadne's Crown

Pass with its ardent star, ere you entrust
Your furrows with the necessary seed,
Or, heedless, risk the year's expectancy
To an unready earth.

Many begin
To sow ere Maia sets ; but oft their hopes,
When harvest comes, are mocked with empty ears.
Nathless, if you be pleased to sow the vetch
Or vulgar phasel, nor despise the care
Of the Pelusian lentil, then for you
Boötes at his setting gives the sign
With no uncertain light. Up and begin !
And cease not seed-time till mid-winter comes.

For to this purpose doth the golden sun
Order his round meted in several terms
By the twelve constellations of the world.
Five Zones possess the heavens, and one thereof
Glows scarlet with the lustre of the sun
For aye, and aye with the sun's fire is scorched ;

Whilst far away on utmost right and left
Stretch to the distant poles two frozen tracts,
Sea-green with ice, and black with murky storms ;
And other twain 'twixt these and the mid-zone
The gods vouchsafed in grace to weakling men,
And slant-wise carved between them both a way
Whereon the due procession of the signs
Should wheel.

Mark how beyond Rhipoean peaks
The world towers steep to the north, but southward
sinks
Sheer down to Libya. High above our heads
One pole for ever soars ; the other views
Dark Styx and spectres of the nether world
Under our feet.

The mighty Snake above
Like to a river winds his sinuous coil
Around—between the Bears, the Bears who shun
The touch of Ocean.

And below, 'tis said,
Eternal night in timeless silence broods

Wrapped, as a pall, in ever-deepening gloom ;
Or else from us Aurora journeys back
Thither, and there re-lumes the day, and so
Whilst we are freshened with the morning breath
Of sunrise horses panting up the sky,
There ruddy Vesper lights his twilight torch.

And thus it is we learn betimes to tell
The wayward changes of the sky, and mark
Seed-time and harvest-time, and when it fits
To dip our oars into the treacherous calm
And launch our furnished fleets, and when to fell
The timely forest pine.

Ay, not in vain

We watch the birth and death-day of the Signs,
And the Four Seasons, diverse each from each,
That make the perfect year.

If now and then

The chill rains keep the husbandman at home,
How many a task doth he fulfil at ease,
Which, did the sun shine, would be scamped apace.

The ploughman hammers at the hardened fang
Of his blunt share, scoops wine-tubs out of trees,
Or brands his flock, or stamps his numbered sacks.
Whilst others sharpen stakes and two-pronged forks,
Or twist Amerian osiers into bonds
To curb the trailing vine.

Others, again,
Are busy weaving baskets from the shoots
Of limber thorn.

No time than this more meet
To roast your grain, or grind it at the mill.
Why on the very festivals themselves
Some work at least nor gods nor men forbid :
The saintliest conscience scruples not to tap
The flooded watercourse, or fence the corn,
Or snare the birds, or burn the briars, or plunge
Your bleating flocks into the wholesome brook.
And often comes the peasant with his ass
Crawling from market, heavy-laden, home
With apples in cheap plenty on its back,
Or oil, or pitch, or mill-stones deftly hewed.

And for our craft moon after moon vouchsafes
Days in an ordered measure of good luck.
Beware the fifth : for on the fifth were born
The Furies and wan Orcus, King of Death :
And with unholy travail did the earth
Iapetus and Coeus bear and him,
The fell Typhoeus, all the Titan brood
Who banded for the downfall of high heaven.
Thrice did they strive, and strive forsooth to pile
Ossa on Pelion, and on Ossa's height
Again to heave Olympus with her woods ;
And thrice the Father with his lightning smote
And scattered far and wide the mountain mass.
Add seven to ten : that day shall haply fall
To plant your vineyards, or to train your steers,
Or wed the warp and woof ; the ninth again
Smiles upon truancy, but frowns on theft.

And many a task, I wot, will better fare
In the cool night-watch, or at break of day
When all the fields are drenched with morning dew.

By night crisp stubble-land and drouthy mead
Are kindlier mowed : for on the math there falls
No lack of suppling moisture with the night.

And one I knew would work in winter-tide
The livelong night beside the flickering fire,
To fashion torches with his keen-edged blade,
The while his good wife sung the time away
Over her task and drove athwart the web
Her glancing shuttle, or with vine leaf skimmed
The luscious must that simmered in the pot
And cooked above the flame.

But the red corn
Is reaped in noonday heat, and at mid-noon
We thresh the ripened ears. Stripped must we plough
And stripped must sow. 'Tis chilly winter brings
Our holidays, when farmers with the frost
Are chiefly busied to enjoy their gains,
Make merry with their gossips, and rejoice
In mutual junketings. Lo ! winter calls

And, jovial, bids us cast our cares away ;
As mariners, whose burdened argosy
Rides safe at last in port, full of content
Garland their ship with flowers.

Winter's the time

To strip the oak-tree of its mast and cull
Red myrtle and the olive and the bay,
Set snares for cranes and nets to trap the stag,
Hunt long-eared hares, and whirl your hempen sling
To strike the deer with Balearic bolt,
When snows lie deep in drifts, when all the streams
Hurtle with ice.

And haply must I sing

Of autumn stars and autumn's fitful mood,
And what our husbandmen must watch and ward
When the days shorten and hot summer wanes ?
Or when the spring pours down her wealth of showers
On fields of tremulous wheat, on grass-green corn
That burgeons with the milky grain ?

How oft,

Just as the farmer calls his men afield

To reap his golden acres, and begins
Himself to lop the brittle barley haulm,
Have I not seen the embattled winds arise
And surge and clash in universal war,
Uproot wide stretches of the ripened grain
And toss them to the sky ; while round and round
In the black eddies of the storm there whirls
Swift flight of stalks and straws.

And oft again

The floods of heaven in endless squadrons come,
Muster the clouds from far and near and mass
In one grim tempest all the murky rains :
Down falls the deluge : down the firmament
Tumbles its torrent-streams, and sweeps away
All our glad harvest, all our oxen's toil ;
The dikes fill up, the rivers in their beds
Roar as they rise, and every creek of the sea
Frets with the angry panting of the waves.

And he, the Father, girt in midnight clouds
Hurls with an arm of fire his thunderbolts ;

And the great world doth quake ; and wild beasts flee,
And hearts of human-folk sink low with fear ;
And when with flaming brand he strikes the peak
Of Athos, Rhodope, or high Ceraun,
The winds redouble and the storm apace
Thickens ; and now the woodland, now the shore,
Wails with each giant blast in agony.

And since this dread is ever thine, watch well
The seasons of the heavens and their signs :
What coign of space cold Saturn's star affects ;
Along what orbit fiery Mercury roams.

And most of all adore the gods ; and when
Late winter wanes, and gentle spring is here,
Haste in some pleasant mead to celebrate
Those yearly rites which mighty Ceres claims.
For wine is ripest then, and lambs are fat ;
And sweet is sleep amidst well-shaded hills.
So call thy country youth and bid them pray
To Ceres for thee, blending to her joy

Milk and the honeycomb and mellow wine.
And three times let the kindly victim go
Round the green corn, and all thy merry band
Shout as they follow, calling Ceres down
To dwell with us. Nor when the harvest comes
Let any put his sickle to the awn,
Ere crowned with oaken leaves he join in song
And rustic dance to do our Ceres grace.

And that we might foretell by certain signs
Or heat, or rain, or winds that speed the frost,
The mighty Father has himself ordained
The warnings of the moon month after month :
What tokens mark the lull of southern blasts,
And what the signals—noted oft—that bid
The farmer keep his cattle nigh the byre.

See, when a gale springs up, how on the nonce
The instant anger of the troubled deep
Foams in the friths and all the mountains ring
With clang and crash ; meanwhile the distant shore

Throbs with tumultuous echoes and anon
A murmurous crowd of voices fills the woods.
And now the billows scarce can stay their dash
On hull and keel, what time the speedy gulls
Wing screaming from mid-ocean to the shore,
The sea-fowl make a playground of the glebe,
The herons flying from their fenny haunt
Float high above the clouds.

And you shall see
Full often, when the wind is close at hand,
The stars themselves shoot headlong from the sky ;
And as they trail their long-drawn tracks of flame
Silver the sable night ; often again
Dead leaf and flimsy chaff fly here and there,
Or frolic feathers skim across the wave.

But when the region of the truculent North
Blazes with lightning, and the thunder shakes
Eurus' and Zephyr's dwelling-place alike,
Then dikes are full, and all the country-side
Swims with the flood, and mariners at sea
Furl their wet sails.

For never yet did rain
Strike any man unwarned : or he might note
Cloud-loving cranes, when storms begin to brew,
Swoop to the abysmal shelter of the vale,
Or mark the heifer gazing at the sky
With broadening nostrils scent the troubled breeze,
Or flashing swallow flit around the mere,
Or in the marsh frogs chant their ancient plaint.

And many a time the thrifty emmet bears
Out of the secret store-houses her eggs
By narrow well-worn pathways, or on high
A giant rainbow drinks the dew, or now
The army of the rooks with serried wings
Jangle and jar as in a long array
They quit their feeding-grounds.

Anon there come
Tribes of the sea-fowl (such as quest for food
In Asian fields by fair Cayster's pools)
And jostle one another as they crowd
To toss the dewdrop water plenteously

Over their feathered sides, and now they dip
Their heads beneath the wave, and now they run
Into the tide, and revel in their bath
For very wantonness.

And you shall mark
The impish raven stalk the shore apart,
And with a mighty caw invoke the rain.
Even the maidens working round the lamp
O' nights foretell a tempest, when the oil
Sputters and sparkles and great mushroom growths
Gather along the wick.

Nor are less clear
The signs of cloudless calms and sunny skies
Than the storm heralds : for the stars shall show
Like chiselled discs, and the moon rise unstained
By any borrowed splendour of the sun ;
Nor lank cloud-fleeces float across the sky,
Nor Thetis' darling fowl, the Halcyons,
Towards the waning sunlight on the shore
Unfurl their wings, and the uncleanly swine
Forget to toss their litter to and fro.

The mists descend and brood along the plain,
The owl on the gable keeps her sunset watch
And plagues the night with ineffectual hoot.

And on the crystal air there soars in sight
Nisus, and she who chastisement must reap,
Scylla, for rapine of the purple lock.
And wheresoever with her fugitive wings
She cleaves the breeze, lo ! on the wind there sails
With shrilly clamour close upon her track
Nisus the foe, Nisus the terrible.
And wheresoever Nisus mounts the wind,
Lo ! Scylla flutters as with fugitive wings
She cleaves the breeze.

The rooks in bated tones

Thrice and again repeat a softened note,
And you shall hear them in their roost above
Chattering to one another in the leaves,
Thrilled with I know not what mysterious charm.

And the storm spent, how gleefully they hie
Home to their callow youngsters in the nests.
And this they do, methinks, not that the gods
Have portioned them some special gift, or fate
Bestowed a deeper sense of things to be ;
But, when the storm and fitful mists of heaven
Shift in their course and Jove with gale and shower
Contracts the rarer atoms and makes rare
The dense, then do their spirits suffer change,
And other pulses stir their hearts awhile,
Other than when the wind-tost clouds were rife.
And thence the wild bird's chorus in the fields,
And thence the gladness of the kine, and thence
The Paeon of the rooks.

But the swift suns
And the procession of the moons watch well,
So shall the morn not fool you, nor the night
Trap with her tranquil snares.

For if the moon
With a blurred crescent frame the darkling air,

Ploughmen and mariners be warned in time,
A mighty rain is nigh ; but if her face
Maidenlike mantles with a blush, the wind
Is near ; since alway Phoebe's tender gold
Turns ruby in the wind. Ye well may trust
The counsel her fourth birthday brings, and if
Pure and unstained she sail across the sky
With flawless crescent, lo ! that livelong day
Ay, and the days that it begets, shall pass
Windless and rainless till the month be gone,
And sailors safe on shore to Panope,
Glaucus, and Melicertes, Ino's son,
Shall pay their vows.

And signs the sun shall give
Orient, and when he plunges in the waves.
The surest signs attend the sun, or those
He brings with early morn, or with the stars.

When, shrouded in the mist, a demi-orb,
He flecks with dappled hues the birth of day,
Beware the rain ; for speeding from the sea

Comes Notus, foe to branch and blade and beast.
Or when his morning rays loom through a mass
Of riven cloud, or when the dawn appears
Pale from the saffron chamber of her lord,
Lo ! sorry safeguard shall your vine-leaves prove
To the ripe grape ; so fierce the clattering hail
Shall dance upon the roofs.

But even more,
Methinks, than all of these, his journey done,
It boots to mark the fashion of his flight.
For often then do variant colours pass
Across his face ; whereof a scarlet flame
Warns us of wind, and purple dusk of rain.
But if the dusk and crimson fire be blent,
Then rain and wind and storm alike shall rage
In universal broil. Let no man say
That I should put to sea on such a night,
Or loose my cable from its anchorage.
But if, whene'er he gives us back the day,
Or veils the gift again, his orb shine clear,

Then of a truth the clouds shall frown in vain,
And tree-tops rustle in the bright north wind.

And so, in fine, what tale the twilight tells,
Or what fair breeze shall blow the clouds away,
Or what the purpose of the wet south wind,
All these the sun shall show. And who dare call
The sun false seer ?

Nay, more, he oft foretells
The march of black revolt, and the ferment
Of underground rebellion.

Who but he,
Mourning, her Caesar dead, for hapless Rome,
Shrouded his splendour in a lurid gloom,
What time an impious world looked on aghast,
Dreading eternal night ?

Those were the days,
Forsooth, of portents from the land and sea,
Ill-omened dogs, and birds of doom.

And oft

Did we not view the riven furnaces
Of Etna roll their seething waves along
The country of the Cyclops, flooding forth
In streams of molten rock and spheres of flame ;
And all the sky of Germany was filled
With noise of battle ; and strange shudders shook
The mountain Alps.

And up and down the land,

Cleaving the silence of the sacred groves,
Sounded a voice of marvel, and there came
In the dusk twilight shadows of the dead
Wondrously pale ; and (O ! the horror of it !)
Beasts spake like men.

The rivers ceased to flow,

And the earth opened, and great drops of sweat
Gathered upon the bronzes in the fanes,
And sculptured ivory shed grievous tears ;
Whilst with his frenzied flood Eridanus,
The prince of rivers, whirled the woods away,

And swept the cattle and their byres alike
Across the vasty plain.

And in those days
The ominous entrails of the sacrifice
Ceased not to threaten, and the wells ran blood,
And in the city street there rang o' nights
The howl of the wolf.

And down a fleckless heaven
Streamed untold thunderbolts, and doomful stars
Past numbering.

Then did Philippi see
Twice in unnatural combat Rome meet Rome,
And hear the clash of kindred swords ; and twice
The plains of Thrace and Macedon drank deep
Of Roman blood : and the gods deemed it just.

So in those regions shall it come to pass,
That ploughmen, as they till the massy earth,
May light on Roman spears time-worn with rust ;

Or with a clumsy mattock strike perchance
Some dead man's morion, and then view aghast
The giant bones within their cloven tomb.

Gods of our fatherland ! Gods of our homes !
O Romulus and Mother Vesta, hear !
Guardians of Tiber and the Palatine !
Grant that this royal Youth, who still is ours,
Become the saviour of a ruined world !
Forbid it not ! For surely long ago—
Ay, to the full—our blood has washed away
The guilt of Troy and false Laomedon.
And long ago the envious halls of heaven
Have pined for Caesar, making as their plaint
That he should heed the triumphs of this world,
A world forsooth where wrong and right are blent,
A world that teems with war, a world that reeks
With countless crime, where evermore the plough
Lacks its due honour, and the hind is forced
Far from his desolate fields, and reaping-hooks
Are straightened into swords.

Lo ! to the East

The tumult of Euphrates, to the West
 Germania cries for war, and close at hand
 Our neighbour cities break their leaguèd troth
 And rush to battle ! Fratricidal Mars
 Rages from pole to pole.

So chariots

Bound from the bars and dash along the course,
 Vainly the driver draws the bit, his steeds
 Whirl him where'er they will ; and thus the car
 Speeds to its goal unheedful of the rein.

BOOK II

BOOK II

So far of tillage and the sovereign stars.
Now be my song of Bacchus, nor forget
His bosky thickets and the fruit that decks
The tardy olive.

Come, Lenaean ! come,
Lord of the winepress, Father of the vine !
For now is nature laden with thy boons,
And by thy bounty all the joyous earth
With grape-clad autumn teems, and brimming vats
Foam with the vintage :

Come, Lenaean ! come,
Lord of the winepress, Father of the vine !
Strip off thy buskins, bare thy comely feet
And plunge with me into the purple must.

First will I tell of trees and bid you mark
The manifold order of their birth.

How some
Spring into being, spreading far and wide
At no man's asking, of their own intent ;
And fill the meads and fringe the winding streams.
Such are the poplars, such the pliant broom,
The supple osier, and the sea-green groves
Of leafy willows whitening in the wind.

Others again are born of scattered seeds :
The lofty chestnut, and the oak who bears
Jove's glory in his boughs, the forest king ;
And kindred groves from whose oracular leaves
Greece hears her fate.

And some there are, like elms
And cherry-trees, around whose fostering roots
A very thicket springs of youngling plants :

Even so the baby laurel of the Muse
Nestles beneath its mother's ample shade.

This was primeval nature's plan : and hence
Sprang all the verdurous glory of the woods,
Of leafy bosage, and of holy grove.

But by-and-by men happed on other ways,
Which practised art in time made manifest,
And rent from off the delicate mother stem
The fresh young slips and set them trench by trench ;
Or planted out the ground with poles, or stocks
Cleft quarterwise, or sharpened stakes.

Again,
Some kinds there are who bide the archèd growth
Of their sunk scions, and the shoots that spring
Quick of their quick out of a common soil ;
Or of their roots ask naught, whose topmost spray
The gardener in his pruning scruples not
To render trustfully to mother earth.

See, too, the marvel of the olive branch
How from its sapless timber, dry and hewn,
Issues a living root.

And you may mark
Trees innocently interchange their boughs :
So pears transformed yield apples ; plum-trees glow
With stoney cornel-fruit incarnadine.

Come, then, to work, my husbandmen, and learn
How in their several kinds our plants are reared,
Mellow the wilding fruits with skilful toil,
And scorn to let your acres waste in sloth.
Think you what joy was his who bade the vine
Teem upon Ismarus and clothed Taburne
With one vast raiment of grey olive groves.

And thou, Maecenas, lustre of my life,
Who art the sovereign partner of my fame,
I pray thy presence, one with me partake
This new emprise, and towards the broadening deep
Unfurl thy swelling sails.

And yet, methinks,
I scarce can hope to compass all my aim
Within this verse. No ! though a hundred tongues
Were mine, and mine a hundred mouths, and mine
A voice of bronze !

So let our galley glide
Around the fringes of the shore. Behold !
The land is near ; nor will I stay our course
With poet's fantasy, or tedious phrase.

Various the nature of the forest tribes.
Some, to the luminous province of the sky
Though towering self-begot, are void of fruit,
Yet hale and lusty, since in mother earth
A certain native virtue ever dwells.
Nathless, if you ingraft the barren branch,
Or in some trench, tilled by laborious spade,
Plant them anew, lo ! even these shall shift
Their wildwood temper, nor be slow, when schooled
To follow wheresoe'er your science calls.

And likewise so the sterile shoots, that grow
Round the deep-rooted boles, shall bear betimes
If one by one they spacious are set
O'er ample fields. Else ever does the shade,
Cast by their giant mother's verdurous gloom,
Filch the young buds and blight the timely yield
Worn with endeavour.

Trees that spring chance-born

Wax sluggishly, whose leafy shade abides
Our unborn heirs ; even thus the dwindling fruit
Forgets its ancient virtue, and the vine
Bears sorry grapes meet but for larcenous birds.

And so we see toil's tribute must be paid
For all alike, and all in trenches ranked,
And all by labour diligently trained.

Methinks the olive best repays our care
When bred from parent stocks, the grape from slips,
And Paphian myrtle from the perfect trunk.
From shoots tough hazel springs, and mighty ash,
Poplar, whose leafage crowns Alcides' brow,

And the Chaonian acorn dear to Jove.
So the proud palm is born, and thou, O fir,
Who in due time shalt brave the perilous sea.

But by ingraftment prickly arbuté bears
Harvest of almonds ; barren plane-trees teem
With lusty apples ; beech and rowan bloom
All silver with the petals of the pear
And snowy chestnut ; while beneath the elms
Swine munch their full of acorns.

But the arts
Of budding and ingraftment are not one.
For mark you where amidst the bark of the stem,
Bursting their filmy tunics, buds peer forth
How gardeners carve a tiny lurking-place
In these same nodes ; wherein they prison germs
Plucked from some stranger tree, and bid them wax
One with the sappy rind.

But when they graft,
The knotless trunk is lopped, and ways are cleft

With wedges to the core ; where fecund slips
 Are straightway set ; and in a little while,
 Lo ! a vast tree, with ample boughs bedecked,
 Leaps to high heaven, and marvels at strange leaves,
 Strange fruit—her own yet not her own.

Again

No kind of tree is single in itself—
 Lotus, nor willow branch, nor lusty elm,
 Nor Cretan cypress ; neither changelessly
 Do unctuous olives grow—oblong are some,
 Some shuttle-shaped, and others plucked unripe ;
 Nor do the orchards of Alcinous,
 Whether of Crustumine or Syrian pears
 Or ponderous Wardens, spring from selfsame shoots ;
 Nor in the vineyards of Methymnia
 Does Lesbos gather vintages like those
 Which wreath our Latin trees.

Of grapes we know

White Mareotic, and the Thasian,
 (These for stiff soils, and those for lighter apt)

Psithians more meet for raisin wine, Lagenes,
Whose subtle juice anon betrays the feet
And knots the tongue ; Rath-ripe and Purple-
hued.

And thou, O Rhoetic wine ! I search for song
To hymn thee duly ; nathless seek thou not
To vie with our Falernian cellarage.
Strong Aminoean, who the homage claims
Of Tmolus and imperial Phanae ;
And small Argitis wine, which rivals both
For bulk of must and power to last the years.
Nor can I pass thee by, O Rhodian grape !
Dear to the gods and to the second dish ;
Nor, Bumast with exuberant clusters, thee !

But numbers lack to mark each name and kind,
Nor boots it of a truth to tell their tale.
Methinks the man, who sought such numbering,
Would list to reckon up the grains of sand,
Whirled by the West winds over Libyan wastes,
Or, when the wilder passion of the East

62 THE GEORGICS OF VIRGIL

Falls on our argosies, would count the waves
Which the Ionic ocean rolls ashore.

But every tree springs not in every soil,
Willows are native of the streams ; the marsh
Bears alder in its ooze, and stoney braes
The barren ash, while myrtles most delight
In the sea fringes ; and your vineyard loves
Broad sunny slopes, and yews the icy North.

Behold the ends of the earth tilled for men's use,
From where the eastern Arab makes his home
To where the painted Scythian dwells, and mark
How every tree claims its allotted land :
India alone black ebony doth bear,
And Saba boasts her frankincense alone.

What need to tell thee of the dewy balm
That perfumed stems distil, or berried fruit
Of evergreen acanthus ? Ethiop groves
All silvered with soft down ? or how they comb

A silken fleece from leaves in far Cathay?
Or of that utmost corner of the world
By Ocean shore where Indian forests grow
Such that no shaft may cleave its airy way
Above the tree-tops?—and, i' faith, that race
Is not behindhand in the bowman's craft.

Media, again, bears citron sour of juice
With clinging savour, blessed antidote
To purge the deadly poison from our bones
Whene'er fell step-dames brew the baleful cup,
Mingling their simples with unholy charm.
In truth a stately tree, and for its form
Most like a bay; yea, truly did it shed
The selfsame scent abroad a bay 'twould be.
Its leaf defies all tempest, and its flower
Clings close beyond compare; wherewith the Medes
Heal noisome rheums and old men's lack of breath.

Yet neither wealthiest Media's citron groves,
Nor the fair stream of Ganges, nor the tide

Of Hermus flooding thick with gold, can mate
Thy glories, Italy ! Nay, not the Ind,
Nor Bactra, nor Panchaia's plain that reeks
With frankincense.

For in this land of ours
No oxen, breathing flame, have ever ploughed
A tilth to sow the giant dragon's teeth,
Nor human harvest bristled through the plain
With serried spears and casques.

But here abound
The plenteous fruits of earth, and Massic wines,
And olive trees, and goodly herds of steers ;
Hence comes the mettled courser to the wars ;
Hence thy white kine, Clitumnus ; hence the bull,
The sovereign sacrifice, who oft has led,
Besprent with lustral waters, templewards
The victor chariots of triumphant Rome.
Here dwells eternal spring, here summer reigns
O'er months beyond her sway ; and twice the
flock
Brings forth, and twice the orchard fruits.

Behold,

In this our land, no savage tiger prowls,
 No angry lion's whelp, no wolf's-bane tricks
 The hapless gatherer, no scaly snake
 Hurries its monstrous rings along the ground
 Or winds in circling coil those vast lengths.
 Yet more. What stately cities without count,
 Look you, are ours! What handicraft of art!
 What wealth of towns niched high on craggy steep
 By mortal hand! What rivers gliding past
 Those time-worn battlements!

Or shall I tell

Of the great seas that wash our either shore?
 Or sing the spacious glory of our lakes?
 Thee, Larius, the mightiest, and thee,
 Fretting thy billows with the very roar
 Of the sea's self, Benacus?

Will you hear

Anon of havens, and the giant bar

That dams the Lucrine—how the ocean chafes
With thunderous might what time the Julian port
Rings with the baffled flood, and Tuscan tides
Come surging up the channels of Avernè?
This is the land whose veins were wont erstwhile
To stream with silver and with copper ores,
And flush with plenteous gold.

In this same land

A very breed of heroes was begot :
Men of the Marsi, and their Sabine kin,
The Volscian pikemen, and the hardy tribe
Of Ligures.

Here Marii, Decii sprung,
Noble Camilli, and the Scipiades,
Grim warriors twain were they :

And, greatest, thou,

Triumphant Caesar, who, fresh laurel-crowned
In Asia's utmost zone, dost bar betimes
Yon craven Indian from our Roman hills.

Hail ! land of Saturn, mighty mother, hail !
Mother of noble harvests—noble men !
For thee, O mother, shall my Muse essay
The glory and the art of olden time,
For thee unseal the holy springs of eld,
And through the towns of Rome chant Hesiod's lay.

Now turn we to the temper of our soils ;
Their force, their colour, and their power to bear.
And first of land unyielding to the plough
And churlish mountain-sides, and brambled fields
Of stones and hungry marl—these make the joy
Of long-lived olives, such as Pallas loves.
And for a sign see oleasters spring
Thick on the selfsame spot and strew the ground
With wilding fruit.

But where the soil is fat
And joyous with sweet wells, or where the plain,
All lush with grasses, teems with plenteousness,
Such land as we are oft-times wont to view
Far down the mountain in some hollow vale,

Where drips the rivulet from steepy rocks
And brings the kindly ooze—a plain, forsooth,
Which breasts the south and cherishes the fern,
That foe to ploughshares—here your grape shall
wax

Full lustily anon, with bounteous floods
Of wine, here shall your clusters amply grow,
And brew such liquor as from golden bowls
Flows for the gods' delight whene'er we hear
Hard-by the altar the sleek Tuscan blow
His ivory pipe, and on the groaning dish
Men offer up a steamy sacrifice.

But if your bent be rather to the kine,
To nurture calves, and lambs, and kids that mar
The tender shoots, then seek the fertile meads
Of far-away Tarentum, and such plains
As luckless Mantua lost, where snow-white swans
Feed on the sedgy brooks ; your herds shall find
No lack of pasture there or limpid wells.
Nay, you shall see the very grass they crop

Throughout a lengthy day renewed afresh
By the cool dews of one brief summer night.

Dark soils and rich beneath the ploughshare's stroke
With crumbling mould—a character we ape
By tith—are best for corn ; nor shall you view
From ever another field so many wains
Dragged homewards by the slowly-pacing steers.

Nor is that soil inept, whence husbandmen
Have, all impatient, cleared the trees, and hewed
The longtime cumbering groves, and, root and branch,
Despoiled the ancient homestead of the birds,
Who from their nests forlorn speed to high heaven,
What time the field, once their's and nature's, gleams
Burnished by ardent shares.

And, look you, now,
How the lean gravel on the hillside slope
Can barely furnish pasture for the bees
Of lowly lavender and rosemary.

How marl and meagre sandstone, honeycombed
By dusky water snakes, declare the soil
Beyond all other earths a toothsome feast
For coiling serpents and a labyrinth
Wherein their brood may lurk.

But land which fumes
With subtle mist and drift of dewy reek,
Which drinks the moisture deep into itself
And yields it back at will, which clothes the lawns
With an unfailing robe of fresh young grass,
Nor frets with briny rust the iron share—
That is a land whose vines shall wreathe your
 elms
With lavish vintages, whose olives teem,
Whose soil your husbandry shall surely prove
A friend to kine, a servant to the plough.
Such land does wealthy Capua till, such land
Lies round about Vesuvius and her heights,
Or where capricious Clanius threatens doom
To lone Acerræ.

Now will I disclose
How you shall tell your soils.

Say that you seek
If land beyond its wont be light or dense—
Seeing this loves the corn and that the grape,
Ceres the denser, but the slacker mould,
Lycaeus, thee.

Choose you a fitting spot
And bid a pit be deeply dug in ground
Closely compact : then shovel back the earth—
Ay, every jot—and tread the surface smooth.
And if through lack of stuff it fail to fill
The utmost brim, be sure your soil is light,
More apt for cattle and the generous grape.

But when the earth refuses to return
From whence it came and overtops the pit
In its replenishment, 'tis dense with clay ;
Beware the unyielding clod, the stubborn ridge,
And yoke your sturdiest team to break the ground.

While for that salty soil which folk term sour—
Hapless for harvest, hostile to the plough,
Whose vines gainsay their lineage, fruits their
name,

This shall its token be :

Go pluck you down
From where they hang beneath the smoke-stained
roof

Your osier baskets woven close that serve
As colanders for wine. Therein bestow
This evil earth with sweet spring water mixed
And press it to the full ; and you shall see
The moisture slowly ooze and giant drops
Drip through the wicker-work ; whereof the taste
Tells a plain tale in truth, and twists awry
The mouths of those who tempt its bitterness.

Rich soils thus briefly shall you know ; for mark
How, as you toss from hand to hand the mould,
It crumbles never, but in handling cleaves
Pitch-fashion to the palm. Surpassing tall

Grow grasses in dank earth whose nature teems
Beyond due measure.

May my field be quit
Of such abundance, nor my firstling ears
Burgeon in over-lusty soil !

Or light,
Or heavy lands their character betray
By their sheer weight. A single glance foretells
The blackness of the earth, or what the hue
Of this or that ; but cold's a curse most hard
For our conclusions. Only now and then
Malignant yews, dusk ivy-tods, and pines
Vouchsafe a hint.

Now, having heeded well
These counsels, be ye sure in ample time
To thoroughly bake your soil, nor stint the plough
Trenching the very mountain-side, nor fail
To lay your upturned furrows longtime bare
In the north winds, or ever you implant
The joyous children of the vine.

Those fields
Are best whose crumbling mould lies loose—a task
Which winds and chilly frosts partake, and he,
The brawny delver, tossing to and fro
His scattered acres.

Now those husbandmen
Whose caution naught escapes, search out betimes
Twin soils, whereof one nurses for your trees
The infant vines, the other by-and-by
Shall welcome them out-planted row by row,
Lest a too sudden shift to novel earth
Estrange the nurseling grape.

Nay, but they note
(So each should stand again as erst it stood,)
The heavens' aspect on each several stem :
Here, that it bore the brunt of southern suns,
There, that it turned its back upon the pole,
Of such great moment are these youthful moods.

Whether hillside or plain best fit the vines
Let your first question be. If 'tis a plain
Whose fertile field you purpose for your plot,
Plant close ; no laggard shall the wine god prove
In such abundant growth. But if your choice
Be for broad slopes of mountain, or a soil
Crested with knolls, then largely spread your ranks.
Nathless, each alley with its straight-drawn path
Must, as you set your trees, most nicely square :
Even as a legion in some giant fight
Deploys its cohort train, and stands to arms
In open field with due array of war
Ere the grim clash of battle has begun,
Whilst all the landscape ripples like a sea
Of radiant brass, and Mars between the hosts
Hovers in doubt.

So let your vineyard through
Be meted out in equal avenues.
Not that alone our idle fancy feeds
On such a sight, but rather that the land

In this wise only deals a share of strength
To all alike, and boughs find space to spread.

Now may you ask what depth your trenches need.
Well, for a vine I would not fear to trust
A slender furrow. Trees strike deeper down,
Into the very bowels of the earth :
And chief the sovereign oak, which sends its roots
So far towards Tartarus as towers its crown
Up to the winds of heaven.

Hence nor gales,
Nor rain, nor winter storms can lay it low :
Unmoved it stands and triumphs, as time rolls,
O'er many a generation, many an age
Of mortal men by the sheer force of life ;
Stretching afar this way and that a might
Of branchèd arms, whilst its midself upholds
Burdens of shade.

Let not your vineyards slope
Down to the sunset ; nor amongst the grapes

Plant hazel bushes ; nor for cuttings choose
The topmost shoot that decks or tree or vine—
So mighty is their love of earth ; nor wound
With blunted knife your scions ; neither set
Wild olives in their midst. For oftentimes
Some heedless husbandman lets fall a spark
Which, by the oily rind at first concealed,
Seizes the solid trunk, and shoots aloft
Among the leafage, waking with a roar
The skyward air : then, wending on its way,
Lords it o'er branch and utmost bough supreme,
Wraps all the boscase with a cloak of fire,
And, close compacted in a murky reek,
Belches black clouds to heaven.

Most dire its rage

When from on high storms swoop upon the woods,
And the gale fresh'ning hurries flame on flame.
Lo ! then the vines are stricken in their roots,
Nor shall the knife restore them, nor the earth
Teem, as of yore, with all their wealth of green ;

78 THE GEORGICS OF VIRGIL

Only wild barren olives, bitter-leaved,
Reign in their place.

Let none, however shrewd,
Win you, what time the north wind blows, to stir
The hardened soil, for now doth winter keep
Your lands close pent with ice, nor lets the slip
Implanted strike its frost-bound root deep down
Into the earth.

'Tis best to plant your vines
When with the blush of spring comes homing back
The silver bird by snakes abhorred ; or when,
Ere the first frosts of autumn, the swift sun
Scarce touches winter with his chariot steeds,
Though summer-time be spent.

Oh, but the spring !
The spring that loves the green-wood and befriends
The forest trees ! In spring the heaving earth
Craves for the fruitful seed.

Then from on high
Comes Father Æther, the omnipotent,
And pours his fertile showers into the lap
Of a glad spouse, and quickens all her yield
One in his vastness with her vasty self.
Then the lone copses ring with song of birds,
And the herds couple on their wonted days.
Our bounteous mother earth teems with her kind,
The meadows loose their bosoms to the warmth
Of western breezes, and a gentle dew
Hangs over all ; so that the tender herb
Fears not the coming of each new-born sun,
Nor do the young vine-branches dread the assault
Of southern tempest, nor the north wind's might,
Driving the torrent rains across the sky,
But break in bud, unfurling leaf on leaf.

Methinks 'twas such another day—and such
A drift of days—that in the dawn of time
Lit a young world.

Their tender growth ; and while the glad shoot leaps
Towards the heavens, and with unbridled course
Speeds through the limpid air, forbid the knife
E'en for the trunk itself, but here and there
With prudent finger-tips pluck out the buds.
When by-and-by your vines have crept aloft,
Winding with lusty stems around the elms,
Clip ye the leaf and trim the branch : no more
Do they abhor the steel. The time has come
To play the tyrant, and to curb apace
Those wandering boughs.

Moreover must you weave
Fences of wattle, wards against the kine.
This chiefly so whilst yet the leaves are green,
And all unconscious of their woes to come.
For to harsh winters and imperious suns
Are sent for our undoing further plagues.
The vineyards furnish sport for woodland ox
And troublous roe ; or pasturage for sheep
And greedy heifers. Since no winter dew,



Crystalled in hoary rime, no summer sun,
 Smiting amain the thirsty cliffs, can vie
 In mischief with those flocks, whose venom'd teeth
 Gnaw at the stem, and brand it with a scar.

Ay, for this very crime we offer up
 A goat to Bacchus at his frequent fanes ;
 Hence came old Tragedy to tread our stage ;
 And hence the sons of Theseus first ordained
 Prizes for rustic wits at village fairs
 Or round the crossway altars ; hence again
 The goatskins, smeared with oil, whereon youths
 dance
 In their gay cups, adown the velvet sward.

And hence Ausonian farmers, sons of Troy,
 With artless rhymes and laughter free as air
 Make holiday, and don their fearsome masks
 Of hollow bark ; and call on thee aloud,
 Bacchus, with joyful song.

 Then do they hang,
 High in thy honour on some lofty pine,

The tiny images that swing and smile,
Whose virtue clothes the vineyards round about
With lavish harvests, bids the hollow vale,
The steepy mountain gorge—yea, every spot
Whereto the god inclines his comely head—
Teem with abundance.

Hence we celebrate
The solemn rites of Bacchus, and we chant
Our fathers' litanies, and bear aloft
Platter and cake, and to his altars lead
The victim goat by the horns, whose luscious flesh
On spits of hazelwood anon shall roast.

Yet further care your cherished vines demand—
A never-ending task ; for year by year,
Thrice and again, must all the ground be tilled,
And the clods broken with the constant hoe,
And the trees lightened of redundant shade.

So shall your toil come alway circling back
As the years roll along their wonted grooves.

For lo ! no sooner have the vineyards shed
Their lingering foliage, and the chill north wind
Shattered the leafy glories of the woods,
Than your keen farmer looks to next year's work,
And, with a stroke of Saturn's sickle, prunes
And harasses anew his vines, and moulds
Their fashion as he cleaves.

Be ever first
To trench the soil, and first to bear away
And burn the branches that you lop, and first
To house once more the vine poles, but be last
To garner in your vintage.

Twice a year
The shadowy leafage overwhelms the vines,
And twice dense growth of weeds and throng of briars
Creeps o'er the yield : or this or that alike
An irksome task. Ay, your broad acres serve
To brag about ; but when you come to plough,
The less the better.

Likewise must you cut
Lithe shoots of woodland butcher's broom, and reeds
That grow along the marges of the stream,
Nor shall the wilding osiers spare your toil.
Nay, when the vines are bound, and sickles lie
Idle amongst them ; when, the day's work done,
Your last man in the vineyard sings aloud
Over the utmost rank—why, even then
You needs must rack the land, and stir the dust,
And tremble lest Jove strike your purpled grapes.

Far otherwise the olives ; for they need
No fostering care, nor seek the pruning-hook,
Nor mordant rake, when once their roots have
gripped
Deep down the soil, and learned to brave the winds.
For the kind earth, once by the ploughshare riven,
Yields sap in plenty to the youngling plants,
And, by the selfsame aid, lush crops anon,
Wherewith do thou in mellow fulness breed
The olive, dear to Peace.

And you shall see
How fruit trees, haply conscious of the might
Of their young boles, and heritage of strength,
Leap skywards of their own accord, nor crave
Our succouring a jot.

Meanwhile around
Forests are groaning with their bulk of fruit,
The haunts of woodland birds are all ablaze
With blood-red berries ; fodder for the herd
The bosky clovers yield ; from overhead
Pines fling their torches, shedding ample flames,
To feed our fires o' nights.

And shall mankind
Grudging their toil, forbear to plant the land ?

Why dwell on lofty trees ? Even lowly brooms,
And willows furnish foliage for our kine,
Shade for our shepherds, wattles for our crop,
And provender for bees.

What joy to view
Cytorus with its sea of wavy box,
Or groves of Locrian firs ! What joy to mark
Fields that owe naught to tillage or the care
Of any man !

Ay, barren forests crown
The peak of Caucasus, which wild east winds
Are rending—riving ceaselessly ; and yet
Each has its harvest—timber good and true—
Pines for our ships, cedars and cypresses
To deck our homes :

Whence also farmers carve
Spokes for their wheels and rollers for their wains,
And bend the shallop's keel. Lo ! sallows yield
Withies in plenty, and the elms their leaves ;
Myrtle and cornel-tree, the friend of war,
Strong shafts for javelins ; and yews are bent
For Ituraean bows. Nor does smooth lime,
Nor box, obedient to the busy lathe,

Ploughed by the sharpened steel, due form refuse.
And the light alders, launched upon the Po,
Swim o'er its violent flood ; and swarming bees
Are caged in hives of bark, or hollow trunk
Of some dead oak.

What gifts does Bacchus bring
Of like account ? Bacchus ! Why, he has proved
The cause of very crime. 'Twas he, forsooth,
Maddened the Centaur-folk, and made them bow
The knee to death—Rhaetus and Pholus too,
And eke Hylaeus with his giant bowl
Flaunting the faces of the Lapithae.

O happy, happy Toiler in the fields,
If thine own happiness thou didst but know,
Spoilt child of Fortune !

For thy simple wants,
Far from the clash of armoured battle, Earth,
The ever-faithful, out of a willing lap
Scatters her ready store.

For thee, in truth,
No sumptuous palace with imperial gates
Pours from its countless halls morn after morn
A flood of courtiers ; true, thou mayst not gloat,
With open mouth, o'er jamb and lintel pranked
With costly tortoise shell ; nor gaze and gape
At tapestries wrought with strange conceits of gold,
Or statues moulded of Corinthian bronze ;
Nor are thy snowy fleeces stained with dyes
Of Tyrian purple ; nor thy limpid oil
Marred with the scent of cinnamon ;

And yet
Unbroken peace—a life that knows no guile,
With treasures manifold are thine. For thee
The spacious freedom of the open fields,
Caverns, and living lakes, and dewy dales,
And lowing cattle, and sweet slumber-time
Under the forest trees ; and woodland glade,
And haunt of bird and beast ; and rustic youth,
Patient to labour, bred to scanty fare,

And reverend age, and worship of the gods.
Methinks the feet of Justice lingered here
Last as she fled from earth.

But for myself

First do I pray, above all other aims,
The gracious Muses, whose poor priest am I,
For the great love which thrills my inmost soul,
That they may take me to themselves, and teach
The starry ways of heaven, the sun's eclipse,
The travail of the moon; whence earthquakes spring;
What forces move the unfathomed, turbulent sea
To burst its natural bonds, and sink again
Back to the tranquil deeps; why winter days
So promptly quench their sunshine in the waves,
And what slow spell delays the lingering nights.

But if this may not be—if I, perchance,
Am too faint-hearted, and too chill of blood
To win a pathway to these lofty realms—
Then let the meadows and the running brooks

Be my especial joy, and bid me love
The woods and streams without a thought of fame.
O let me dwell amid the grassy downs
That fringe Spercheus, or beside thy slopes,
Taÿgetus, whereon the Spartan girls
Keep Bacchic feast ! O who will set my feet
In coolest vales of Haemus, sheltered o'er
By leafy canopies of boundless shade ?

For happy is the sage, whose master-mind
Grasps the dim secrets of the Universe :
Who tramples underfoot all fear of death,
All dread of an inexorable doom,
And the loud roar of greedy Acheron ;
And yet how happy he who in the woods
Talks with the Fauns, and wins the heart of Pan,
And old Sylvanus, and the sister Nymphs.

He cares not for the honours of the State,
Nor kingly purple ; neither fears the brawls

That break the bond of brotherhood ; nor heeds
The swoop of Dacian hordes across the banks
Of their confederate Danube, nor the State
Of mighty Rome, nor all her neighbour kings
Doomed to defeat ; nor ever does he weep
With him that wants, or envy him that hath.

But plucks the fruitage that the boughs bestow,
And takes the gifts the willing meadows yield,
Blind to the forum of the madding town,
The rigour of the iron-hearted law,
The Courts which chronicle the deeds of Rome.
Whilst otherwhere men fret the darkling seas
With venturous oars ; or headlong dash to arms ;
Or win a secret way within the walls
And palaces of kings.

And this man sacks
Cities, and havocks all their household gods
Just for a jewelled cup, or dainty couch
Of Tyrian purple.

Here is one that digs

A grave to shroud his wealth, and, crouching,
broods

Over the golden hoard ; another stares

Up at the Rostrum in dumb ecstasy ;

Whilst this, like one bewitched, listens agape

As waves of plaudits through the theatre sweep

Again and yet again, from all alike,

Plebs and Patricians.

Others vaunt themselves

Whose hands are dabbled with a brother's blood,

Barter away the hearths and homes they loved

For lifelong banishment, and seek anew

Another country and another sun.

Meanwhile our simple farmer tills the land

With the curved plough : his task year after year,

The mainstay of his country and his home,

His children's children and his droves of kine,

And faithful steers.



Nor ever do the months
Slacken their yield, but teem with copious fruit,
With young of cattle and with sheaves of corn,
And heap the harvest in the furrowy field
Till the barns burst.

Then comes the winter-time ;
His olive mills are busy with the grist
Of Sicyon's berries, and his swine troop home
Sleek and well-liking from their fill of mast,
And arbutë flings him largess in the woods.

Or golden autumn lays its varied store
Down at his feet, whilst on the cliffs above
The vintage basks and mellows in the sun.
Ay, and sweet little ones shall climb and cling
Close to his lips ; and spotless virtue guard
The innocence of home.

His cows around
With pendulous udders promise stores of milk,

And fat kids tussle on the merry turf
With combatant horns.

And he, the lord of all,
Keeps holiday, and lies upon the grass,
Whilst boon companions crown the bowl with flowers
Around the sacred fire, and pour the wine
With due libations ; calling unto thee,
Lord of the wine-press, Father of the vine.

Then shall he set a mark upon the elm,
And make a match for wingèd javelins
Among his shepherds ; or perchance they bare
Their hardy bodies for some wrestling bout
In country fashion.

So in days of yore
Lived the old Sabines ; and so Remus lived,
And Romulus, his brother : in such wise,
Etruria waxed in strength ; and so, O Rome,
Didst thou become the glory of the world,

And in one city's battlement embrace
Thy seven hills.

And so did Saturn live
King of the golden age ; ere Jove had grasped
The sceptre ; and ere graceless man had slain
His faithful ox, and batten'd on its flesh,
Whilst yet no warlike clarions woke the world,
Nor iron anvils rang with hammered swords.

But lo ! our course has journeyed far and wide
O'er boundless plains ; 'tis time to unyoke our steeds,
And loose the harness from their reeking necks.

BOOK III

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Now shall my lyre be tuned for thy delight,
O mighty Pales, and for thine who watched
The flocks erstwhile where far Amphrysus flows,
O memorable Shepherd, nor forget
Thy woods and waters, rustic Arcady.

How trite, methinks, these other legends seem
Whose poesy of yore was wont to thrall
Our leisured sense !

For who knows not the tale
Of stern Eurystheus ; of the praiseless king
Busiris and his altars ? Where's the bard
That has not sung boy Hylas and his nymphs,
Latona's holy island, and the bride,
Whom Pelops, of the ivory shoulder, won,
An ardent charioteer ?

But I must tempt
Paths that shall lift these feet—ay, even mine—
Above the dusty world, and set my fame

Winging from lip to lip throughout mankind.
For I will be the first, if life but hold,
That ever hied him to his fatherland
With all the Muses captive in his train
Reft from their Helicon, and first to bear
To thee, my Mantua, the Syriac palms.

There will I build me by the river's brink
A marble temple set in grassy lawns
Where spacious Mincio strays in idle coil
And decks his banks with wavy wreath of reeds.
In the midshrine shall Caesar stand, as lord
And master of my fame ; to do him grace
I'll don the conqueror's robe, and flaunt men's eyes
In Tyrian purple ; while a hundred cars
Each with four steeds caparisoned, shall pass
Along the waterside. And at my call
Greece shall desert with one consent her games
Olympic and Nemoean for our shore
To vie in foot-race, or to try a bout
Of leathern cestus here.

Whilst I, bedecked
With chaplet of clipped olive-leaves, will bear
Gifts to the Gods. Behold me as I lead,
With a glad heart, the stately retinue
On to the shrine : or watch the sacrifice
Of slaughtered steers ; or view upon the stage
The trick of shifting scenery, or mark
The purple curtain lift, as if up-raised
By the wild Britons woven on its folds.

And on the gates of ivory and gold
Embattled tribes of Ganges will I carve
Hard-by, Quirinus, thy victorious arms.
There, too, majestic Nile in turbulent flood
Shall surge with war, and columns spring aloft
Bright with the brazen pillage of her fleets.
Ay, and I'll give you Asia's conquered towns ;
Vanquished Niphates, and the Parthian trick
(There trust alway) of flight, and arrows shot
Back as they fly : and trophies torn from foes
At the two ends of earth : and triumphs twain

O'er peoples led from Ocean's either shore,

And round about shall stand in living stone
The marble semblance of thy mighty sons,
Assaracus, of those who bore the names
Of Jove's own race—our father Tros and he
The Cynthian God, who built the walls of Troy.
Whilst ill-starred spite shall shudder at the thought
Of the avenging Furies, and the flood
Of sinister Cocytus : snakes that twine
Around Ixion : the relentless wheel :
And Sisyphus with his unconquered stone.

Meanwhile fain must we seek the Dryad's haunts,
Untraversed woods and glades—no slight command
But thus Maecenas wills, and failing him
My soul lacks impulse for its lofty task.

Arise ! arise ! away with laggard sloth !
Hark with what clamorous note Cithaeron calls !
Hark to the summons of Laconia's hounds,

To Epidaurus with her well-schooled steeds !
How the glad woodlands ring and ring again
Re-echoing the cry !

Yet wait awhile

And I anon will gird my loins and sing
The glowing story of great Caesar's wars,
And waft his name across a gulf of years
As vast as that which yawns 'twixt Caesar's self
And old Tithonus.

Whether 'tis your bent,
Desirous haply of Olympian Palms,
To rear fleet coursers ; or for tilth to breed
Stout yokes of steers—of all things else be sure
To choose your dams for special make and mould.
The best-shaped cow has oft an angry look,
Coarse head and ample neck, whose dewlaps hang
From jaw to very knees ; a length of flank
Beyond the common ; all her other points
Large in proportion—yea, ev'n to her feet,
With shaggy ears and crumpled span of horns.
Nor would she please the less if dappled white,

Or shy of the yoke, or sometime prone to butt
With vicious head : in aspect like a bull,
Up-standing hind and fore—with length of tail
That sweeps her footprints as she paces on.

Not less than four years old, or more than ten
Marks the true limits of Lucina's claims,
And customary marriage of the kine.
Their latter days lack aptness to beget
Or vigour for the plough—so loose your bulls
In the blithe time while yet the beasts are young.
Let there be early mating in your herds,
And by successive births recruit the stock.

Ah ! miserable men ! your brightest day
Flies always first : disease creeps on and pain
And sad old age—and then the iron grip
Of pitiless death.

Ever your stock want change,
Ever must you renew : and lest too late
Regret waits on your loss—forestall your lot
And for the herd choose yearly fresh young blood.

Ay, and your horse demands the self-same heed—
I pray you mark this well—for those you rear
As the appointed hope of future stock
Must ev'n from birth exact your special toil.

See from a foal the colt of generous breed
Pace though the fields : how loftily his feet
Now spurn the turf, and now with lissome grace
Alight anew. Dauntless he leads the van
Ever the first to dare the threatening flood,
To brave the untrodden bridge : no shadowy fears
Can make him quail. He bears a haughty crest,
Small shapely head, brief barrel, stalwart back,
A massive chest that teems with brawny life.
And for his hue bright bay has much repute
Grey also, but wan sorrel and dull white
Meanest of all.

Behold him when he hears
The clash of distant arms ! Restless he frets,
With ears up-pricked, with quivering thew and limb :
His nostrils heave with gusts of gathered fire.

Dense is his mane, and tossed aloft it falls
On the off-shoulder : and along his loins
His furrowed flesh runs like a double spine.
Pawing the dust his hoof prints deep its way,
And rings with solid horn adown the road.

Such were the steeds sung by the bards of Greece ;
Such Cyllarus who bent to Pollux' rein ;
Such were Mars' coursers and the yoke-mates twain
Mighty Achilles harnessed to his car.
Such too great Saturn when at hand he heard
His consort's step ; then nimbly tossed a mane
Shoulder-wards, and in semblance of a horse
Sped, waking Pelion with a shrilly neigh.

Yet when strength fails, as ev'n for such as these
Perforce it must, weary with weight of years,
Sore-stricken in health—keep the old horse at home,
Nor in his dotage let him play the fool.

For cold is love with years, a labour lost.
And should it haply enter in the lists

Impotent fire, like stubble-fields aflame,
Much fury, little force. So search ye out
Young lusty steeds and chiefly mark their age.
Their other virtues next, and what the breed
Of sire and dam ; and how each separate colt
Chafes at defeat, or glories in the prize.

Hast ever watched a race, and seen the cars
Burst from the gates in headlong rivalry
And, like pent torrents loosed, flood down the course ?
Mark in their pride of youth the charioteers,
Topping the summits of expectancy ;
And all the while the hot tumultuous blood
Ebbs with each pulsing tremor from their hearts.

Erect they whirl the snaky lash ; then yield,
Stooping, the rein. Round flies the flaming wheel ;
Now high, now low tossed in the race they seem
To ride the void and mount the very winds.
On ! pauseless—restless—girt with yellow clouds
Of rising sand, flecked with the foamy breath

Of panting rivals at their heels—and all
For the sheer love of praise, the lust of fame.

King Ericthonius it was who first
Harnessed four horses to his car ; and stood
Lord of fleet wheels ; and first the Lapithae,
They of Mount Pelion, backed the steed, and gave
Bridle and bit, and rings where he might run,
And learn—for all his rider's weight of mail—
To scorn the ground, and prance with haughty pace
In amble and curvet.

For sport or war
No easy task to find a fitting sire.
For either venture masters of the craft
Choose fresh young stallions, mettled, swift of foot ;
Even though the veteran full oft has charged
Your flying foes ; or counts his ancestry
In famed Epirus, or brave Argolis,
Or boasts himself akin to Neptune's breed.
These precepts heeded well—when the time comes,

Watch with especial care the chosen beast,
The leader and the husband of your herd,
That with plump flesh he wax both stout and strong.
For him the math of flowering pasturage,
For him good store of corn, and crystal springs ;
Lest he should fail you in the dulcet toil
And weakling stock betray a weakling sire.

The mares meanwhile thou purposely shalt keep
But scant of flesh ; and when love stirs their hearts
To amorous dalliance—stint them of their food,
Bar them from running brooks, and let them speed
Along the course, and sweat beneath the sun,
What hour the thrashing-floor groans at the flail
And flimsy chaff flits in the western breeze.
This do ye lest the kindling soil be dulled
With plenteousness, and choked with sluggard ease,
Nor drink its fill of love, nor store it deep.

Now wanes the care of sires and in their turn
The dams claim our regard. When, big with foal,

The appointed weeks fulfilled, they roam abroad,
Let no one yoke them to the ponderous wains,
Or suffer them with flying leap to spurn
The roadway, and run riot in the fields,
Or stem the violent flood.

But they should browse
In spacious glades beside an ample stream,
By banks of velvet moss and greenest sward,
Where caves may house them, and o'er-hanging rocks
Shelter with shade.

Around the wooded shore
Of Silarus, or underneath the oaks
On verdant Alburne, swarms a certain fly,
Asilus as we call it, but elsewhere
By Greeks hight æstros. 'Tis an angry pest
With strident hum ; and, hearing it, the herds
Of one accord speed frantic from the woods
With cries that stun the madding cope of heaven,
And forest margins of parched Tanager.

This was the creature Juno planned of yore
A scourge to wreak fell vengeance on her foe,
Io, the heifer, child of Inachus.
So watch ye well to guard your kindled herd
From its approach, and since the noon-day heat
Maddens its venom, let them graze at dawn,
Or with the star-shine, harbinger of night.

Now all our care the new-born calves command,
And instantly are branded with the signs
That mark their race ; and thus are set aside
These for the herd, these for the holy fanes,
And these to cleave the land, and plough the soil
Bristling with broken clods.

So, while the rest
Crop the green herb, do thou seek out the steers
Meet for a zealous service of the land ;
Teach them betimes, and enter on the path
Of discipline while yet in docile youth
Their minds take easy impress. So at once

Fix collars of slim withe around their throats,
And when free necks that never knew a rein
Welcome their bondage, by the self-same rings
Yoke them together in well-mated pairs,
And school their paces to a rhythmic tread.

Then oft-times let them drag along the road
An empty car, so light their footsteps print
No trace but on the topmost dust ; anon
Let beechen axles, groaning with the weight
Of some huge burden, rattle at their heels,
And brazen poles that draw the harnessed wain.
Give them for food in youth while yet untamed
Not grass alone, nor sorry willow-leaves,
Nor fenny sedge, but ears of ripened grain.
Nor let your kine with youngling calves new-born,
After our fathers' fashion, fill the pail
With snowy streams : but keep their ample teats
For sole contentment of their well-loved young.

But if your bent be rather the array
Of savage battle, or you seek to race

Swift wheels along the marges of the stream
▪ That waters Pisa, or in Jove's own wood
To speed your flying car : then must your steed
Be disciplined right early to the sight
Of mettled warriors, and the clang of arms,
The blare of clarions, and the noisy wheels
Clattering along the road ; nor in his stall
Start at the jangle of the harness bells.

And more and more should he be schooled to joy
In the caresses of his master's voice,
And sound of kindly hands that pat his crest.
So when a very weanling from his dam
Learn to be bold : and ever and anon
Practise his muzzle to the lissome rein
Whilst yet his years are tender, and his heart
Timid and trembling in its nescient youth.

Three summers spent, another close at hand,
And now your steed should circle in the ring ;
The cadence of his paces justly tuned,
His supple knees in due succession arched,

And strive like one that, yet o'er mastered, strives.
Then of a sudden let him scour the plain,
As if enfranchised of the bit, and dare
The very winds to catch him ; while his feet
Scarce graze the topmost surface of the sand.

Even as the Northern blast sweeps from the Pole
With serried might, and scatters rainless clouds,
And Scythian storms alike : tall ears of corn
And billowy meadows shiver in the breeze :
The tree-tops murmur ; and long lines of waves
Surge to the shore—for lo ! the North wind comes
And sweeps or land or ocean with his wings.
Thus shall your steeds, their muzzles flecked with
 blood,
Sweat to the goals o'er Elis' mighty course ;
Or bravely bear the Belgic chariot's yoke
On docile necks.

And now, their schooling done,
Lush fodder give, so that their ample frames
Wax stout apace ; for erstwhile you shall find

High fare beget high moods that will not brook
The lash that stings nor face the cruel curb.

Whether the services of steed or steer
Find chiefest favour, be ye very sure
No care shall steel their forces like the care
That wards them from the secret fret of love.
So let your bull be banished to lone fields,
Curtained by hills, and hedged by spacious streams,
Or keep him tethered, feasting, in his stall.

For lo ! the very vision of his mate
Little by little filches all his strength
And wastes his substance like consuming fire.
Yea, even from cool forest and green sward
She steals his heart away with dulcet lures,
So subtly sweet that oft her haughty swains
Seek crest to crest the arbitrament of war.

Behold her grazing in great Sila's groves,
A comely heifer ; while the champion bulls
Clash in a tournament of strength supreme.

Now one, and now the other, charges home :
Wound follows quick on wound : the sable blood
Drenches their bodies ; and, as horn meets horn,
So vast a clamour echoes through the wood
That the broad cope of heaven itself doth seem
To render roar for roar.

The battle done,
No more the warriors harbour side by side.
The vanquished suitor seeks an unknown clime,
A far-off exile : moaning as he goes
His dire disgrace : his wounds that tell with shame
A rival's triumph : moaning most of all
Loss of his love—love lost and unavenged.
With one sad glance at home and all it holds
The fallen Monarch quits his ancient realm.

Now comes a time when his perpetual care
Lies in the practice of his powers : at night
He makes a couch pillowed on flinty rocks :
His daily fare sharp sedge or thorny leaf.

Anon he tests his strength and learns to fling
His heart's rage in his horns, butting the trees
And, as a prelude to the coming fray,
Defies the very winds, and spurns the sand.
Then with regathered strength, and force refreshed
He marches forth to war : and headlong swoops
Down on his heedless foe.

As when a wave
In open ocean rears its snowy head,
Draws from the deep a coil of quickening tide,
Far out at first—then, rolling to the land,
Roars, like some monstrous thing, among the rocks,
And, shattered, falls a mountain mass of foam,
The eddying pools beneath seethe from their depths
And hurl the murky sand far up the shore,

Ay, in like fashion all the tribes of earth,
Mankind and beasts, the dwellers in the sea,
The flocks and herds, the fowl with painted plumes,
Rush to the madding flame ; love levels all.

At such a time and such a time alone
The lioness forgets her cubs, and prowls
Across the plain, savage beyond her wont :
The ungainly bear along the forest-side
Lavishes death and havock without stint :
And fierce the boar, most fell the tiger's rage.
'Tis an ill time to tread the Libyan waste.

And for our horses, look you, how they thrill,
Body and limb, should they but scent afar
The well-known waft. Lo ! who shall stay them now !
No master's bridle-rein, no cruel lash,
Nay, nor the rocks nor over-hanging cliffs,
Nor adverse streams that tear the craggy steeps
And whirl them down the flood.

Behold the boar,
The giant boar of Samnium, how he speeds :
His forefeet plough the soil, he whets his tusks,
Rubs his rough sides against some forest tree,
And steels his shoulders every way for war.

What need to sing the Youth, whose very bones
Love, the dread tyrant, floods with passionate fire.
Black is the midnight, and the troubled tide
Rent with rare tempests : yet he swims the strait.
Above his head the mighty gates of heaven
Peal forth the thunder : and the waves, that dash,
High up the cliffs, shriek warning in his ears :
Alas ! no parents' tears shall call him back,
Nay, nor the Maiden waiting on the shore
Who fain must follow him to cruel death.

What need to tell of Bacchus and his team,
His spotted ounces, or the violent tribes
Of hound and wolf ? or the unwarlike stag
Rushing to war ?

Yet truly must you mark
How mares in the wild rage of love transcend
All other beasts. Venus it was that gave
This self-same spirit ; since that ancient day,
When his four Potnian steeds with savage jaws
Tore Glaucus limb from limb.

Love leads them on :

Across the mountain-tops of Gargarus ;
Across Ascanius' roaring flood they fly
And scale the summit, swim the surging stream.

Then of a sudden, when the subtle flame
Kindles their craving hearts—in Spring the most,
Since Spring relumes love's fire—behold them stand
High on the cliffs with faces ever turned
Towards the West breeze, to woo the gentle gale.
And often—so the wondrous story goes—
Without a mate—impregnate of the wind,
O'er hills, and rocks, and hollow vales, they speed
Now here—now there : but, Eurus, not to thee,
Nor towards the sunrise, choosing for their goal
Caurus and Boreas, or the Southern shore,
Cradle of dusky Auster, whose chill dews
Sadden the face of heaven.

'Tis the time

A fluid poison trickles from their veins ;
Which shepherds rightly term Hippomanes,

Hippomanes that evil step-dames cull
And brew with herbs, and witch with baneful spells.

But time flies fast—irrevocable time,
Whilst we, entranced, saunter from theme to theme.
Enough of herds : rests there another charge
How best to handle flocks that bear the fleece,
And shaggy goats. A task indeed, and yet
What glorious hopes, brave husbandmen, it breeds.
For ne'er a doubt have I 'twill try our steel
Ere Art triumphant win the day, and deck
With her especial grace my lowly tale.

Yet evermore sweet ecstasies of song
Whirl me away to thine untrodden peaks,
Parnassus ! Yea, how glad a thing it is
To tread untarnished summits whence no track
Of earlier pilgrims points an easy way
To Castaly.

Hear ! Holy Pales, hear !
For lo ! the hour has come for loftier strains.

This my first mission, this my first command :
See that your sheep in pleasant pens be housed,
Cropping the foddered herbage, till betimes
Comes summer with its treasure-house of leaves :
Strew the hard ground with litter of soft fern
And straw in plenty, lest the chilly frost
Trouble your tender flock : and skin and foot
Suffer some loathly ill.

Now to the goats

Pass we, and order leafy arbutus,
And fresh-drawn water from the running streams ;
See that their pens, well-sheltered from the wind,
Face the full noontide of the wintry sun ;
What time Aquarius coldly sinks to rest
And with his urn bedews the flitting year,

Truly our goats no lesser care command
Than the fleece-bearers : nor their profit less :
Albeit Milesian wool, encarnadined
With dye of Tyre, be costly merchandise.

They yield an ampler stock, rich stores of milk ;
In truth the more your matin milk-pail foams,
The more at even flows the joyous stream.
Nor is this all : the goats from Cinyps' marge
Render their shaggy ringlets to the shears,
Luxuriant locks, garnered from grey beard chins,
To do good service in our soldiers' camps,
And shelter patient sailors from the blast.
For food they ask but what the woodland gives,
To crop the topmost peaks of Arcady,
Thickets of prickly brambles, thorny brakes
That fringe the precipice. And by-and-by,
With an unfailing memory, behold
How deftly do they make the journey home
Guiding their young, and just in nick of time
Swing their full udders o'er the welcome sill.

And, since they crave but little care of man
In summer-time, so we with greater zeal
Should harbour them from ice and snowy storms
And furnish with full hands their provender,

126 THE GEORGICS OF VIRGIL

Their foodful leaves ; nor the whole winter long
Prison our hay-loft with a niggard lock.

The west winds call, and lo ! the summer smiles,
And with her smile sends sheep and goats alike
Back to the pasturage of mountain dales.
Then with the dawning day-star let them range
The cool fresh meadows, while the morn be young,
The grasses crisp with hoar-frost, and the kine
Sip sweetest dew-drops from the tender sward.

Now when the fourth hour of the day has come
Laden with drought : and the cicadas' song
In plaintive chorus cleaves the clustered trees,
Then do I bid you give your flocks to drink
Or from the wells, or from the stilly pools,
Or water gathered in your wooden troughs.

But at mid-noon search out a shady dell,
Wherein some forest monarch, Jove's delight,
Spreads from time-honoured trunk its many boughs,

Or where some grove, black with unnumbered oaks,
Rests, wrapped in holy shadow, nigh at hand.

Then give them once again the limpid stream :
And let them feed until the set of sun,
Till twilight breezes cool the heated day,
Till dewy moon-beams freshen drouthy lawns,
Till widowed Halcyon sings along the shore,
And from the boscase comes the pipe of birds.

Needs must I tell you why my song shall wing
To pastures where the Libyan shepherds roam
And camp in wickered townships scattered wide ?

There shall you see full oft throughout the day,
Throughout the night—ay, through a whole moon long,
The roving herds graze on and ever on,
O'er vasty solitudes of houseless sward,
So limitless the measure of their plains.

His worldly goods go with him as he goes,
This Afric herdsman, house, and home, and arms,

Quiver of Crete, and trusty Spartan hound ;
As when our stalwart soldiers on the march,
Armoured in Roman fashion, plod their way
Under a groaning load : and then betimes,
Before expectance, pitch their camp and face
In due array of war the unheeding foe.

Other the scene in truth where Scythian tribes
Dwell by the murmur of Moeotian waves,
Where troubled Ister rolls his yellow tide,
Where Thracian peaks trend to the very Pole.

There harboured in the stalls men keep their flocks :
Around are herbless fields, and leafless woods,
Around the land lies without form and void,
Around the endless burden of the snow
Masses a frozen pile seven cubits high.

Winter and ever winter without end,
Ever the icy breath of Northern winds :
The very sun himself lacks power to speed

The pallid shadows—nay, nor when he drives
His horses to high heaven, nor when he dips
Headlong his car in Ocean's crimson flood.

Now of a sudden in the running stream
Gathers the filmy ice, and lo ! the wave
Bears on her breast a weight of armoured wheels,
And bids the spacious waggons be at home
Where once she welcomed argosies.

The frost

In common wreckage rends the brazen urns,
Men's very raiment hardens on their backs,
The hatchet cleaves the stream of limpid wine,
The pools compact in blocks of solid ice,
And sloven beards bristle with shaggy rime.

Meanwhile the sky is full of ceaseless snow :
The cattle perish, and the large-limbed ox
Stands idly vested in the clinging frost.
The stags in huddled throngs are stark with cold,

Strangely o'er-burdened, till their antler tips
Scarce peer above the summit of the drifts.

No need to slip the hounds ; no need for nets,
No need for tasselled scare of crimson plumes ;
For lo ! the herd are whelmed in massy snow
With vainly battling breasts, with piteous cries
While ready glaives strike at their hearts and slay,
And happy hunters, shouting, hale them home.

In deep-delved caverns bide their human folk,
Housing beneath the earth in lazy ease,
And pile up store of timber on the hearths,
Yea, roll the very elms to feed their fires,
Whereat they spend the night in frolic mirth,
And with rough brew of berries, cups of mead,
In joyous fashion ape our Southern wines.

Such is the tale of those unfettered tribes
Who dwell beneath the seven Northern Stars

In garb of fur, reft from their tawny kine,
Forever smitten by Rhipoean storms.

If your desire be goodly store of wool,
First above all see that your meads are clean
Of prickly gorse, or caltrops, clinging burrs.
Eschew lush grass, and from the outset seek
The flock that bears a fleece of silken snow.
And for your ram though clad in perfect white,
Should his mouth show beneath its dewy roof
A sable tongue, then cast him from your pens,
And search your teeming fields for other sires,
Lest, when the lambs are born, the youngling wool
Be marred with dusky flaws.

An old tale runs,
I know not if the tale be worthy trust,
How on a time great Pan of Arcady
Beguiled thy godship to the earth, O Moon,
With fleecy guerdon white as driven snow
Calling thee to him in the forest deeps
Nor didst thou spurn his call.

But if perchance

Milk be your bent, then to the folded flocks
Bear, each man for his own, abundant store
Of clovers, lotus, herbs that smack of salt,
So shall they crave the more to slack their thirst,
So shall their udders swell with ampler yield,
And the milk savour of the subtle brine.

Many there be that bar the newborn kids
From commerce with their dams ; and from the first
Muzzle their tender mouths with poignant steel.
And some would take the milk of dawn or day
Straight to the cheese-vat when the evening falls :
The twilight and the sunset yield your herd
Carries in baskets to the waking town ;
Or salt-besprinkled stores for winter fare.

Nor let your breed of dogs be last in mind :
Twain shall you rear, and feed with fattening whey.
The speedy hounds of Sparta for the chase,
Fierce mastiffs of Molossis for your guard.

Then may you banish fear lest to the byres
 Robbers should come by night, or wolves break
 through,
 Or Spanish bandits raid you unawares.

Oft shall you course wild asses o'er the plain,
 An ever-timorous prey : and cheer your hounds
 Now to the track of hare, and now of doe ;
 Harry wild woodland boars from muddy lairs,
 And lay your baying kennel on their trail ;
 Or with loud halloa wake the mountain-side,
 And speed some antlered monarch to the toils.

Now must I tell you how to scare the snakes,
 The noisome water-snakes that haunt your stalls,
 With kindled fragrance of the juniper,
 Or fumes of Syrian gum. For oft you'll find
 Some viper, fearful of the garish sun,
 An evil beast to handle, hid away
 Behind ungarnished cribs ; or maybe wake
 Some monster serpent from its earthy bed,

The ruthless foe of oxen, who is wont
To creep for shade and shelter to our pens,
And spit his venom at our folded kine.

Up, shepherds, up, take each man what he may,
Or stones, or staves ; and as he rears his crest
With horrid menace—as his swelling gorge
Hisses with fury—smite him to the ground.
Ah ! but already he has fled the field
And hid his craven head deep in the earth :
Now the mid-tangle of his coil unknits,
His tail lies loosened in a line of waves,
And the last lingering loop slinks out of sight.

The mountain passes of Calabria hold
A noxious worm, famous throughout the land
With lofty gorge and wreaths of scaly back
And lengthy belly flecked with giant spots :
Who, while the waters issue from the wells,
While all the land is moist with ooze of Spring,
And all the winds are wet with Southern showers,

Haunts the lagoons, and housing on the banks,
Ever insatiate fills his sable maw
With spoil of garrulous frogs and prey of fish.
But after, when the fenny pool is parched
And the ground gapes beneath the furious sun,
Leaps to the shore, and, rolling eyes of flame,
Rages in deadly guise along the fields,
Frenzied with heat and maddened with the drought.
May I in idle whim be never lured
To tempt soft slumber under summer skies
Or lie awhile on grassy woodland slopes
What time this monster having sloughed his scales,
Arrayed afresh, sleek with a new-found youth,
Forsaking lair and eggs and poisonous brood
Glides, towering to the sun, while from his jaws
Gleam the quick flashes of a trident tongue.

Now must I tell a tale of plague and pest ;
Their tokens and their causes. First of flocks :
When chilly rain-storms gall them to the quick,
Or the wild winter smites with hoary rime,

Or when at shearing-time their sweat unwashed
Cleaves to the skin, rent by the prickly thorns,
Then does a noisome mange assail the sheep.

Wherefore it is that shepherds bathe their charge
In the sweet waters of some running brook.
Ay, one and all—the ram must take his turn :
See, he goes under, and with soppy fleece
Is set a-floating down the wholesome tide :
Or maybe they anoint the newly shorn
With bitter olive-lees, or unguents mixed
With scum of silver, sulphur from the mine,
Wax unctuous with oil, and Phrygian tar,
Sea-leeks, black bitumen, and hellebore.

But ne'er our task does fortune favour more
Than when we dare to lance the festering blain :
Out of the light its venom lives and thrives,
While shepherds shrink to use their healing hands,
And sit, and pester heaven for better days.
Now when our bleating patient's very bones

Are gripped with dolorous fire, and fever feeds
On his parched limbs, then very meet it is
To turn the courses of the flaming tide
And cleave the hoof and pierce a throbbing vein.

Such is the custom of Bisaltian tribes
And fierce Gelonians, nomad hordes that roam
The Thracian mountains and the Getan steppes,
And quaff strange cups of mare's milk mixed with
blood.

If you should note amongst your healthy flock
A straggler from the rest, who loves to seek,
More often than his wont, the soothing shade,
Listlessly toying with the topmost grass,
Who ever lags behind, lies down perchance
E'en as he browses half across the field,
And wanders home belated and alone ;
Spare not the steel but stamp the mischief out,
Before contagion with its train of woes
Steal to your crowded sheep-cotes unawares.

For never whirlwind swept across the sea,
Nor drove so thick and fast the sudden storms,
As speed these countless murrains through your
herds.

Not here and there, and one by one they fall
But whole battalions in their summer camps.
Mother and young, to-morrow and to-day,
Ay, root and branch, the very race itself.

Bear witness ye who after many years
Visit the pastures of the aëry Alps,
Iapian meadows where Timavus flows,
The castled hills of Noricum, and view
Desolate havock where our shepherds reigned
And waste of empty woodland far and wide.

For here erstwhile there fell upon the land
A time of pestilence—a sorry time,
Bred of corruption in the tainted air
Which sultry Autumn fanned to glowing fire,

So that the hand of death smote all alike
Beasts of the forest, cattle in the fold.

The slimy water festered in the pools,
The grasses grew envenomed in the fields.
Nor did death lead them by the self-same way
To instant doom. With some their piteous limbs
Were shrunk and shrivelled by the fiery drought
That raged throughout their veins: then came a
change

And watery humours suddenly would surge
In such abundance that their very bones,
Molten by venom, one by one were fused
In the rank flow.

And oftentime it happed
In the mid-ritual of the sacrifice
Some victim at the altar of the gods,
With the white fillet twined around its brow;
Ere the priest struck, fell dying at his feet.
The starveling entrails offered at the fane
Refused to kindle, and the augur found

No answer for the votaries of the shrine.
Pale was the blood that scarcely stained his sword,
And faint the languid gout that tinged the sand.

So everywhere around the calves would die
Knee-deep perchance in meadows lush with grass,
Or render up the promise of sweet life
Before the very cribs full-fraught with food.
The dog, the gentle playmate of the house,
Rages with madness, and the sickly swine,
In breathless torture, gasp their lives away
Till their swoln gorges strangle them to death.

Behold the horse, victor of many a race,
Slowly he sinks ; cold comfort to him now
His well-schooled youth. His pasture is forgot,
He flies the running brook, and paws the ground
With restless hoof : his ears, in fitful sweat,
Droop with an icy dew as death draws near,
And parched his skin, resentful to the touch.
Such are the early signs that point the end ;

But in due course the fever waxes fierce,
His eyeballs blaze with fire ; his breath deep-drawn
Laden maybe with lamentable groans,
His flanks from end to end distent with sobs,
Till from his nostrils gushes dusky blood,
And the clenched jaws close on a shrivelled tongue.

At first men found it well with horns of wine
To drench the dying steeds : it seemed the way,
The only way to life : but soon, alas !
The healing potion proved a deadly bane,
And quickened vigour bred but quickened fire.
So the poor beasts, e'en in the hour of death,
(May the good gods grant better fate to us,
Who pray their grace—such madness to our foes)
Gnashed at their mangled flesh with naked teeth.

Behold the bull that ploughs yon furrowed field,
His reeking limbs strain at the weighty share :
Lo ! now he falls : and streams of foamy blood
Flow from his jaws : and piteously he heaves
A farewell moan. His fellow-beast unyoked

Reft of his mate, bemoans a brother's loss,
And gloomily the ploughman wanders home,
The tilth undone, the share still deep in soil.

Where are the forests with their shadowy deeps,
Sweet grasses of the meadow that shall stir
That heart of his again. Nay, not the brook
That bubbles o'er the stones, and speeds away,
Radiant, as crystal amber, to the plain.
His lengthy flanks lie loosened on the ground,
A drowsy burden dims his languid eyes :
His drooping neck, o'er weighted, sinks to earth.

What now bestead the labours of his life,
His kindly help to man, the toilsome clods
His plough up-turned. For him no wine-god poured
The baneful favours of the Massic cup ;
For him no tables groaned with endless feasts :
His banquets, simple fare of leaf and lawn ;
His flagons, limpid springs and running streams :
His nights, but wholesome sleep ungalled by care.

So in that country—as the old men tell—
Never till now did Juno ask in vain
For silvery bulls to grace the sacrifice ;
And see the chariots near her stately shrines,
Drawn by some sorry team of woodland steers.
Never till now did men with weary rakes
Plough the stiff soil : or with their very nails
Implant the corn ; or drag the strident wains
With straining necks across the upland ways.

No wily wolf lies hidden near the pens,
Nor prowls o' nights around the folded sheep :
A trouble keener than the love of prey
Has tamed his soul. And oft-times you shall view
Swift stags that fly mankind and timid does
Roam round the dreaded kennel and the farm.
Now does the boundless sea give up her tribes
Washed to the shore—ay—all that swim therein
Like the drowned corpses of some shipwrecked crew,
While stranger seals seek refuge in the streams.

Death found the viper as in vain she fled
 To labyrinthine strongholds : and the snakes
 Quaked at his coming with astonished scales.
 The sky was churlish to the very birds :
 Headlong they fell from heaven, bereft of life
 High in the aëry clouds.

Scant gain it was
 To change the foddered pasture in the stall.
 Men called on medicine : and her healing art
 Proved but a bane. Great masters of the craft,
 Chiron the Centaur, born of Philyra,
 And wise Melampus, Amyphaon's son,
 Stood by with helpless hands and baffled lore.

Then from the shades of hell into the day
 Came wan Tisiphone, let loose awhile,
 To scourge the land : and drave before her face
 Terror and Plague. And ever day by day
 Her stature waxed aloft, her ravenous head
 Towered to the skies.

The land was full of noise
Rivers and arid banks and upland downs
Rang with the bleating flocks and lowing herds
As the Destroyer smote them drove by drove,
And heaped their homesteads high with carrion dead.
So stern necessity taught men to shroud
The fetid carcasses in mother earth,
Or dig deep pits to hide them from the day.
For even their fells were worthless, and their flesh
Water refused to cleanse or fire to purge.
Nor durst men shear the miserable fleece,
Mouldered to filthy tatters by the pest :
Nor lay a finger on the poisoned yarn.

Worst woe of all was his who dared to don
The loathly garment : for his festered frame
Melted in ardent blains and noisome sweat :
And in a little while the Fiery Curse
Made easy havock of his tainted limbs.

BOOK IV

BOOK IV

THE honey harvests scattered from the skies,
Aërial gifts of heaven at last I sing.
Vouchsafe, Maecenas, to my latest task
The gracious benison of other days.

Come with me, and I'll set upon the scene
A wondrous drama of a pygmy world,
Citizens, soldiers, lords of high degree,
And what their character, and what their craft,
A very nation with a nation's life
In due array shall pass before thine eyes.
Trivial the task, but large the meed of praise,
If adverse fate permit, and thou but smile,
Mighty Apollo, on thy suppliant's prayer.

First must we seek some sure and safe abode,
Some favoured corner where our bees may dwell
Screened from intrusive winds (for winds are apt
To bar the passage of the hive-ward-bound
Laden with food) where never a wanton troop
Of sheep or kids may trample through the flowers,
Or wayward heifer scatter morning dews,
And fret the springing grasses of the field ;
Nor speckled lizard with his scaly coat
Lurk near the hoarded treasure of the hive.

And shun the birds that feast on bees—beware
All feathered fowl, Procne with gory breast
Flecked by her murderous hands—for these same birds
Shall sack and pillage all around, and strike,
Given on the wing, your bees, and bear them home
As dainty gobbets for their ruthless brood.

But nigh at hand let there be crystal wells,
And stilly pools circled with greenest moss,
And shallow runlets stealing through the grass,

There should some palm, or giant olive shade
 The porches of your hive, that when the spring—
 Their darling spring returns—when new-crowned
 kings

Marshal the first-born swarms, and youngling bees,
 Fresh from the combs; are dancing in the sun,
 A friendly bank may lure them to repose
 Out of the heat, and comfortable boughs
 Stay them awhile in leafy hostelries.

Then in the midst, whate'er the water be,
 Or sluggard pool, or briskly running brook,
 Strew willow withes, and cast a stone or two,
 As pebble-continents, so that your bees
 May find no lack of bridges for their feet,
 But spread their pinions towards the summer sun,
 Should the east wind with sudden gust bedew
 A laggard troop, or in the vasty deep
 Hurl them down headlong.

Round about should stand
 Groves of green cassias, and wild thyme that flings
 Its perfume far and wide : and savory

In odorous abundance, and hard-by
Let violet gardens sip the quickening rills.

And for your hives, or sewn of hollow cork,
Or woven of lithe osier, see their gates
Have stinted access. For the winter cold
Clots comb and honey, while mid-summer heat
Fuses with wasteful flow the molten cells,
So guard your bees alike from frost or sun.
Is it for nothing that with emulous zest
They smear the wax over the crannied hive,
Store for this work a hoard of gums, that bind
Closer than bird-lime or than Phrygian pitch ;
And often, if the tale be true, contrive
Snug homesteads in some burrow underground,
Or find a harbour in the caverned rocks,
Or in the hollow of time-eaten trees ?

Nathless must thou, to shroud them from the cold,
When rifts are plenty in their chamber walls,
Smear with smooth clay the hive, above—below,
And scatter leafage lightly o'er the roof.

Suffer no yew-trees near their dwelling-place
Nor roast the scarlet cray-fish at their doors.
Beware the fenny swamp, beware the mire
Of evil odour, and the arching rocks
That ring sound-smitten, when the voice of man
Strikes on the stone, and echo answers back.

Thereafter, when the golden sun has driven
Fugitive winter to the nether world
And with his summer sheen unlocked the sky,
Your bees shall wander forth to glade and grove
To cull the purple harvest of the flowers
And softly sip the ripples of the stream.
Whence some strange rapture that we wot not of
Prompts joyous hearts to tend their nestling brood
And cunningly to forge the wax anew,
And mould the clinging honey in the comb.

So when you look aloft, and see the swarm
Affranchised of their prison and afloat
On the clear bosom of a liquid sky
And marvel when the dusky cloudlet sways

Hither and thither as the breeze may blow,
Be sure to mark them well : they ever light
By sheltering boscase, or by running brook.
Strew there the subtle odours I ordain
Such as bruised balm leaves, humble honeywort,
Clashing the cymbals of great Cybele,
And they shall settle of their own free will
On the charmed spot, and of their own free will
Creep to the hive, as is their ancient wont,
And couch contented in its inmost cells.

But if on battle bent they quit their home
(For oft when rival monarchs seek the crown
Strife with a mighty turmoil stirs their souls)
Then on the nonce you hear—ay, from afar—
The passion of the mob—as though their hearts
In murmurous cadence beat aloud for war.
Anon the well-known blare of brazen Mars
Wakens the loiterers, and through the hive
Ring sounds that ape the clarion's fitful trump.
Then comes an eager hurrying to and fro,

Flashing of pinions, sharpening of stings,
And furbishing of armour for the fray.

Around their sovereign lord they press and throng
Even to the threshold of his royal tent
With clamorous voices challenging the foe.
Till on some fleckless Mayday, when the sky
Lies open like a plain, they sally forth,
Burst through the gates, and high above the world
Join battle in the blue.

The air is full
Of troubled noises, as the armies clash,
Massing and mingling in a mighty orb,
And fall in headlong tumult to the earth.
The heavens ne'er rained more serried storms of hail,
Nor shaken oaks such deluges of mast.

The rival monarchs move amid their troops,
Illustrious by the blazon of their wings ;
A boundless valiance fires each tiny breast,

Steadfast and staunch that none shall make him yield,
Till of the twain one host, or this or that,
A ruthless victor drive before his face.
O passionate strife ! O war of paladins !
And yet a little dust shall silence all !

When by-and-by the rivals from the field
Are by your arts recalled, doom him who looks
The meaner of the chiefs to instant death.
Since in this fashion shall you spare the hive
A wasteful maintenance : his seemlier foe,
(Him shall you mark by sheen of golden mail),
Enthroned forthwith the one and only king.

Twain are the royal tribes : the worthier kind
Of noble shape, in lustrous scales arrayed.
The other, but a thing of squalid sloth
Trailing a bulky paunch through deedless days.
For twofold is the fashion of the Kings,
Twofold their lieges' aspect : these shall show
In loathly disarray, as one who comes

Draggled and travel-stained from dusty ways,
And spits the mire out of a thirsty throat :
While these, in dainty splendour, gleam and flash
Their forms afire with flecks of kindred gold.
This is the nobler breed : and by-and-by
In the due season of the year shall yield
Good store of honeycomb, whence may you press
A luscious flow—luscious yet crystal clear,
Potent to tame the wine god's keenest cup.

But, when your swarms in aimless fashion rove
Skyward, and make a playground of the heavens,
Spurn waxen cells and leave their hives a-cold,
Curb ye their wanton minds from empty sport.
No toilsome task : pluck but the monarch's wings :
When princes lag behind no subject dares
To tempt the roadways of the sky, or strike
The standards in the camp and march to war.

Hard-by a garden pleasance let there be,
Sweet with the breath of saffron flowers, to lure

Your wayward bees awhile, and in the midst
Should stand with willow scythe the guardian god,
Priapus, lord of Hellespont, our ward
From thieves and birds.

Let him whose task it is
Bear pine trees from the mountain-top, and thyme,
And set them in a ring around the hives.
'Tis he must labour till his hands be sore,
'Tis he must plant the soil with fruitful slips,
And shed from friendly urns a genial shower.

In very truth were not the end at hand
Of my emprise, and had I not begun
To furl my sails and speed my prow ashore,
I too, perchance, would sing the art that decks
Lush gardens with a myriad flowers, and tell
How roses bloom at Paestum twice a year,
How joyously the endive quaffs the stream,
How parsley beds the verdurous margins love,
How serpent-gourds creep through the grass and grow
A goodly paunch : nor should my song forget
The loitering blossoms of the daffodil,

The limber bears-foot, pallid ivy-leaf,
Or myrtle amorous of the ocean shore.

For well I mind me once upon a time,
Where dark Galoesus floods the golden fields,
Where proudly rise the stern Œbalian towers,
I met an old man of Corycian race
Who owned some acres of forgotten land,
Some few poor acres, sterile for the plough,
Hapless for cattle, hateful to the vine :
Yet, as he planted here and there a patch
Amid the thorns with herbs and garden-stuff
And with pale lilies ringed them round about,
Vervain and meagre poppies, in his heart
Held himself rival of your wealthiest king :
And hied him homeward at the fall of night
To heap his table with a dainty feast
Not bought with coin.

And ever first was he
To pluck the rose of spring, the autumn fruit.
So when the sullen cold of winter clove

The very rocks, and with an icy curb
Bridled the running streams, already he,
Culling the bloom of tender hyacinths,
Gibed at the sloth of spring, the balmy breeze
That lagged so late. Thus was he ever first
To show a plenteous store of mother-bees
With many a youngling swarm, and press the flood
Of foaming honey from the straitened combs.

In lush abundance grew his firs and limes,
And as the teeming promise of his trees,
Dight in the flowery kirtle of the spring,
Vouchsafed a fruitage, so in autumn-tide
The mellow yield inviolate they bore :
Nor would he fear to plant him rows of elms
Ay, of ripe age, and pear-trees hard as bronze,
And blackthorns grafted o'er with damascenes,
And planes that proffered roisterers their shade.

But the unkindly compass of my verse
Limits my pen—these tales are not for me

And I must leave them as a legacy
For other bards—when I am gone—to tell.
So, prithee, to our bees and you shall learn
The wondrous instinct that controls their race,
By Jove omnipotent of old vouchsafed.
This was in truth the guerdon that they sought
When, marshalled by the clamorous melodies
And clashing cymbals of the Corybants,
They found and fed the infant King of heaven,
Among the Cretan hills, in Dicte's cave.

Thus was it given to bees, and bees alone
To count their offspring children of the State
In common fatherhood : to weld their homes
Into a city, all for all, wherein
They dwell submissive to a sovereign law :
To know the pride of Fatherland : the joy
Of stable households ; and in summer-time,
Evermore mindful of the coming snows,
To toil betimes, and for the common weal
Garner the wages of laborious days.

Some in obeisance to accepted rule
Now, o'er the granaries keep sleepless ward,
Now, sally to their husbandry afield.
Another troop within the household pale
Fashion the groundwork of the honeycomb
With tears of daffodil, and viscid gum
That oozes from the trees, and hang aloft
A roof of clinging wax. Others again
Lead forth an adult youth, their country's hope :
Some mass the crystal honey in the comb,
And with a flood of nectar glut the cells :
Another company by lot decreed
Shall sentinel the gates, and watch in turn
The cloudy floodgates of the firmament,
Or greet the homing of the travellers
And ease them of their packs, or by-and-by
Shoulder to shoulder drive the wastrel crew
Of drones abroad. And over all there hangs,
Above this seething mass of toil, a scent
Heavy with odorous honeycomb and thyme.

Methinks they seem none other than a band
Of Cyclops forging from the stubborn ore
Quick thunderbolts. Some at the bellows toil
Whose leathern lungs now draw—now vent the blast,
Some dip the hissing copper in the tanks.
Beneath their cumbrous anvils Etna groans
As one by one in rhythm antiphonal
With mighty force the giant arms uplift,
Or turn the iron mass this way or that
In the keen grip of the tongs—ay, so methinks
To such endeavour, as each state allots,
(If we may liken petty things with great)
An inborn passion of attainment goads
Our Attic bees.

The seniors stay at home
To guard the town, and fortify the combs,
And mould the cunning fabric of the hive :
Whilst weary youth lags homeward late at night,
Their thighs full-freighted with the scented thyme.
Hither and thither, up and down the world

They sip the seagreen willow, arbutus,
Dusk hyacinth, and unctuous linden-leaf,
Cassia, and crocus, flushed with rosy fire.

For all alike there comes an hour of rest,
For all alike a common call to work.
No sluggards they : the daybreak gives the sign,
Forth the battalions sally from the gates :
And when the warning of the Twilight Star
Bids them return and quit their pasturage,
With one accord they wing their homeward way,
Mindful of cheer and comfort after toil,
And with a noisy hum, buzz round the doors.
So slip they to the cradle of their cells,
The hush of night enshrouds the stilly hive
And well-won slumber claims their weary limbs.

Nor ever, if storms threaten, do they stray
Far from their dwelling-place, or trust the sky
When bitter winds are surging from the East ;
But hug the shelter of their city walls,

Save to fetch water for the wells, or risk
Some trivial raid against a common foe.

And often you shall see them skim the air
With pebbles in their clutch, and poise themselves
Along the aëry clouds, as wavering boats
Take ballast in a battle with the foam.

But of all marvels this methinks is chief :
Wedlock delights them not, nor the faint joy
Of languorous love : nor does the travail of birth
Herald their young, but with untutored lips
They cull their brood from leaf and balmy plant.
Thus do they furnish sovereigns for the state,
Breed tiny burghers for their tiny Rome,
And waxen court and kingdom build anew.

So great their love of flowers, so passing great
Their glory in the art that fills the combs,
That you shall see them, when perchance they wound
Their pinions on some rocky pilgrimage,

Without a thought of self lay down their lives,
And, staunch to duty, die beneath their load.
Hence though the limit of their life be brief
(A seventh summer duly marks its span)
The race itself nor dwindles, nor declines
But, on through countless years its guiding Star
Shines steadfast in the sky, and every tribe
Counts grandsires' grandsires in its pedigree.

Vast is their reverence for the throne, as vast
As mighty Lydia gave, as Egypt gives,
As Media, where Hydaspes' waters flow,
And Parthia, with the homage of her hordes.
In the king's safety lies a bond that knits
All of one mind ; but, he being gone, the bond
Is broken, and the sweets themselves have stored,
Rending the latticed combs, themselves despoil.
The monarch is the master of their work,
Joy of their eyes ; and all his lieges throng
Around his kingship in a murmurous crowd.
Full many a time they lift him shoulder high

And with their bodies shield him from the foe,
And call death sweet that comes with countless wounds.

By such high samples and exemplars swayed,
Some hold that bees, like mortals, have their part
In the divine and universal mind,
Lipping the chalice of ethereal fire.
For God, they say, is everywhere alike,
Or in the utmost corners of the earth,
Or in the waste of ocean, or above
In the illimitable depths of heaven.
And from His spirit creatures of this world,
Mankind, and flocks, and herds, and beasts of the field,
Draw at their birth the subtle breath of life.
So likewise in the end to Him return,
And at their dissolution find a home.
Death has no habitation in their midst,
But, deathless, to the starry host they soar,
And claim their lofty heritage of heaven.

When, in due season, you desire to breach
The imperial palace of the bees, and take

The honey hoarded in their treasure-house,
 First with a draught of water purge your lips,
 And bear in outstretched hands a smoking brand.
 Twice in the year we press the teeming crop,
 And twice our time of harvesting comes round,
 Now, when Taigete, in summer's dawn,
 Amongst the Pleiads shows her comely head
 And spurns old ocean with a scornful foot ;
 Now, when she flies the rain-compelling Fish
 And, sadder than she rose, drops from high heaven
 Into the wintry wave.

Slack not your care,
 Since boundless is the anger of the bees
 An you should harm them. Straightway will they
 light
 Upon a vein, and, kindling in their stings
 A fiery venom, leave the barbs behind
 Entombed, and shed their life within the wound.

If dread of what the cruel snows may bring,
 If thought of coming sorrow stay your hand,

Pity for fallen fortunes, broken hearts,
Why—be it so—yet surely none would shrink
To cense the hive with fragrant fume of thyme,
Or prune away the ineffectual wax.

For oft do stealthy lizards gnaw the comb,
Or darkness-loving beetles throng the cells,
Or drones, who shirk their duties to the State,
Sit at the board, and feast on others' fare.
The barbarous hornet swoops on ill-matched hosts,
Anon come pestilent tribes of moths, anon
Minerva's foe, the spider, drapes her snares
With spacious web athwart the open doors.
And yet the more their leaguered treasures wane,
The lustier they to strive and build anew
The shattered fortunes of their fallen house,
And fill with honeyed store the tiers of cells,
And weave their granaries with loot of flowers.

But nathless bees, like frail humanity,
Must bear the chances of this mortal life,

And fell disease may haply waste their frames,
Whereof you shall not want the certain signs.
For instantly the stricken change their hue,
Gaunt squalor mars their comely forms, and soon
In sad procession from the hive they bring
With funeral pomp the bodies of their sons,
Who evermore shall lack the light of day ;
Or round the threshold, clustering, they hang,
Foot linked to foot ; or lurk within their gates,
Benumbed with hunger, callous with the cold.

Then sounds of direr portent fill the hive,
And you shall hear a lingering, long-drawn moan,
As when bleak Auster mutters in the woods,
Or troubled ocean sobs along the shore
With reflux surf ; or as imprisoned fire
Roars in the furnace, furiously aglow.

Then would I counsel fume of Syrian gums,
And honey proffered in a reedy pipe.
Hearten their spirits thus, and deftly lure

Your languid weaklings to the food they love.
And meet it is their provender to blend
With pounded galls, dried roses, syrup of wine,
Cooking the honeyed mass o'er lavish fires,
Or brew of Psithian raisins, or sweet thyme
Culled on Hymettus, or the mordant reek
Of centaury.

There grows a certain flower,
Moreover, in the fields, which country folk
Call starwort. 'Tis an easy herb to find,
For, from a single root, it shoots aloft
A wealth of leaves : it bears a golden disc,
And in its ample ring of petals shows,
'Midst dusky violet, a purple glint.
Its savour makes wry mouths ; and shepherds pluck
The blossom, where their browsing flocks crop close
Our Mantuan dells, by Mella's winding stream.
Take thou this root, and steep it in the must
Of scented wine, and set some baskets full
Nigh to the doors as nurture for the hive.

But, if a sudden havock wreck your broods,
And naught avail wherewith you may renew
The fountain of the race, methinks 'tis time
I should unfold that memorable art,
Taught by a sage of Arcady, and show
How, from the bowels of some slaughtered steer,
Live bees shall swarm, bred of the tainted blood.
Ay, I will track the legend to its source,
And tell the tale as bruited from the first.

Hard-by Canopus, Alexander's thrall,
Amid the marshes of the flooding Nile,
There dwells a happy race, beloved of fate,
Whose painted galleys float from field to field.
The march of quivered Persia hugs them close,
And, welling from the land of swarthy Ind,
The mighty River cleaves its torrent-stream
In seven mouths and, fattening the soil,
Makes a green Egypt with its murky slime,
And all the country round with constant faith
Trusts to this very art to save their hives.

Hear now the prescript : search ye out a spot,
Scanty by nature, straitened by your skill,
And fence it round about with narrowed walls,
And stinted roof, and pierce, with light aslant,
Four windows facing the four winds of heaven.
Then choose a youngling bull, whose nascent horns
Arch o'er a forehead but two summers old :
And seal his nostrils, seal his panting mouth,
Ay, though he struggle fiercely to be free—
And bludgeon him to death, and bray his flesh,
A battered mass within the inviolate hide.
Then in his prison leave him as he lies,
Pillow his sides with scraps of broken boughs,
And fragrant thyme, and cassia, freshly-culled.

This must you do, what time the western wind
Stirs wintry waves : before the meadows flush
With rainbow-tinted Spring, before the nests
Of garrulous swallows hang beneath your eaves.
And you shall see amid the molten bones
Humours wax warm and quicken with the fire,

And breed strange creatures, wondrous to behold,
 Footless at first, now murmurous with wings
 In mazy coil : then, growing, growing, swarm
 Out on the aëry void. Till as a shower
 Bursts from the summer clouds, or as the darts
 Flash from the tremulous strings, when Parthian guile
 Heralds the fray, behold, the bees break forth !

Which of the gods, ye Muses, which of the gods
 Forged for mankind the magic art—or whence
 Came this new venture for the sons of men ?

The Shepherd Aristaeus—he it was
 Foreswore the fairest valley in the world,
 Sweet Tempe, watered by Penëan rills,
 (For he had lost, so runs the tale, his bees
 By plague and famine) and he stood, forlorn,
 Hard-by the holy fountain, whence the stream
 Wells through the vale ; and lifted up his voice
 To her that bare him with a bitter cry :

“ Mother, Cyrene, Mother, who dost dwell
 In the still deeps beneath this restless pool,

Why did'st thou give me life, and call me son,
Sprung from the mighty gods,—if, as thou sayest,
Apollo, lord of Thymbra, be my sire—
That I should be the scoff and scorn of fate?
Whither, O Mother, whither hast thou thrust
Thy love for me and mine? Why prate of heaven,
And bid me hope to take my place on high,
When, here on earth, the crown of all my toil
Slips from my brow—the crown I barely won
After long years of universal quest
And tireless vigil over fields and flocks?
And yet—and yet thou art my mother!

Nay,

Spare me no more—but with that mother's hand
Uproot my teeming forests—kill my crops,
Set all my byres ablaze with ravening fire,
Cast all my bosky nurslings to the flames,
And with a cruel hatchet hew my vines,
Since, as it seems, the glories of thy son
Wake in thy soul but weary depths of scorn!"
He spake; and lo! the murmur of his words

Fell on his mother's ear far down the flood ;
As in the caverns of the crystal stream
She sat : and, all around, a choir of Nymphs
Spun the rare fleeces of Milesian wool,
Aglow with deepest hues of hyaline.

Children of Nereus they ; Phyllodoce,
Ligëa, Xantho, Drymo ; and their locks
In loosened sunshine fell o'er necks of snow.
Cydippe, golden-haired Lycorias,
The one a maid, a novice-mother one,
Fresh from her travail at Lucina's shrine :
And Clio, and her sister, Beröe,
Daughters of mighty Ocean were they both,
And both engirt with zones of gold, and both
Draped in a dappled hide : and Ephyre,
Opis, Deïope from Asian fields.

Swift Arethusa, last to leave the chase,
Lays bow and quiver down, and joins the throng :
Who, one and all, are listening to a tale

Of Vulcan's follies, told by Clymene,
And stolen kisses, and the wiles of Mars,
Counting the chronicles, from chaos down,
Of all the thousand loves of all the gods.

And as they sat, and sped their fleecy toil
Around the spindles, drinking in the song ;
Behold again there smote Cyrene's ear
The cry of Aristaeus far away,
And all the nymphs sprang from their crystal thrones.
But Arethusa, foremost—ever fleet
Beyond her sisters—reared a golden head
Above the topmost wave, and gazed around.
Then from afar she called :

“O sister mine,

Cyrene, sister ; truly not in vain
Was thy affright, nor vain that bitter cry.
For by the stream sad Aristaeus stands,
Thy son, thy chiefest care, beside the brink
Of sire Penëus, ever making moan,
And ‘Mother, cruel mother,’ cries aloud.”

■

Then a strange terror of a sudden smote
The mother's heart and, "Dally not," she said,
"But lead him hither : he is of the race
Whose feet may tread the gateways of the gods."
And straight she bade the waters stand aside,
Cleaving their depths on either hand, to make
A pathway for her boy. Whereon the stream,
Uplifting mountain-wise, arched o'er his head,
And welcomed him within its spacious breast,
And sped his footsteps deep below the flood.

Now through the kingdom of the waves he goes
And wonders at his mother's dwelling-place.
Marvellous pools in rocky caverns pent,
Strange forests, echoing the ceaseless surge,
Till, with the whirl of mighty waters dazed,
Before him roll the rivers of the earth,
Each from its several source in endless flow,
Beneath the girdle of this vasty world.
Phasis, and Lycus, and the fountain head,
Whence deep Enipeus bursts in foaming flood,

Whence Father Tiber pour his yellow waves,
Whence Anio flows with kindred rivulets,
Whence, roaring o'er the rocks comes Hypanis,
Caycus from far Mysian plains, and he,
With a bull's brow, and span of golden horns,
Royal Eridanus, whose vehement tide
Surpasses all, as through luxuriant glebe
He tears a pathway to the purple sea.

Now does he tread at last Cyrene's bower,
A cavern vaulted o'er with buoyant stone,
And to a listening mother tells the tale
Of idle tears. A band of sister Nymphs
Bring limpid water for his hands, and some
Proffer the softest napery, and some
Heap high the tables with a dainty feast,
And bear the lavish goblets charged anew.

The altars kindle with Panchaeon fumes
And cries Cyrene—"Bring Moeonian wine,
And brim the beakers ; meet it is we make
Offering to Ocean" : and, so saying, prays

To Mighty Ocean, father of the world,
And to the sisterhood of Nymphs, who guard
A hundred forests, and a hundred streams.
Then thrice she scattered o'er the sacred fire
Translucent wine, and thrice the flame leaped high
And lit the roof-tree with responsive sheen.

So with these kindly omens of good hap
Cheering her son, she thus begins her tale :

“ Nigh Carpathus in Neptune's boisterous realm
'There dwells a certain seer, Proteus by name,
Who bears the azure livery of the sea,
And speeds his chariot o'er the mighty main,
Caparisoned with monsters of the deep,
Half-fish, half-steed—lo ! even now he seeks
Emathian harbours, and his fatherland,
Pallene—and to him we sister Nymphs,
And ancient Nereus too, do reverence :
For to this wondrous seer all things are known,
What is—what has been—and what lagging time

Has yet to bring. So did his master will,
Great Neptune, whose uncouth and monstrous flocks
Of ocean-calves he shepherds in the sea.

Him, O my son, your hands must seize and bind
So shall he tell the secret of the plague,
And speed your trouble to a happy goal :
Seize him and bind him, son, for naught but force
Shall win his counsel—bootless are your prayers,
He will not yield—force—iron force is all.
Fetter his limbs with manacles of steel,
And you shall see in time his baffled wiles
Break, like a shattered wave, against his bonds.

And I, thy mother, I will lead the way,
When the sun lights the torches of the noon,
And drouthy is the herd, and cattle greet
The welcome shade—lo ! I will lead the way
To the sequestered cavern of the sage,
Where, oft he sojourns wearied with the waves
And you shall seize him, sleeping, as he lies.

But when you hold him gripped and fettered fast,
Straightway will he assume phantasmal shapes
Of divers beasts, and seek to cheat your toils,
Now in the semblance of a bristled boar,
Or grisly tigress, or a dragon, mailed
In panoply of scales, or lion's dam
With tawny gorge, or like a sudden flame
Slip through his bonds with sound of crackling fire,
Or flow, as fleeting water, from your grasp.
The more his shape in countless change dissolves,
The closer, son, thy grip upon the chains,
Until at last his form transformed appear
As when light faded from his curtained eyes."

Thus spake the Nymph ; and shed a lucent stream
Of odorous ambrosia all around,
Steeping therein the body of her son :
And from his garnished locks, behold there came
A fragrant breath and all his limbs waxed full
With supple strength.

There is a mighty cave.

Cleft by the waters in the mountain-side,
Where many a wave is driven by the winds,
And flows far inland, breaking on the bay,
Safe refuge for storm-beaten mariners.
Here, shrouded by a wall of massy rock,
Proteus was wont to bide, and here the Nymph,
Within a nook that turned its back on day,
Stationed the Youth, whilst all aloof she stood,
Weaving a hiding-place of dusky mist.

Now does the ravening dog-star glow aloft
With rays that parch the folk of thirsty Ind :
Now half its fiery course the sun has sped ;
The grasses wither ; and the rivers gape,
Their sultry channels scorched to beds of mire,
When Proteus, journeying homeward from the deep,
Sought, as his wont, the shelter of the cave ;
While round about him leaped a dripping brood,
Born of the sea, and scattered briny showers
With frolic bounds : then laid them down to sleep,

Calves of the ocean, up and down the shore.
So Proteus (like some herdsman of the hills
Warding the folds, what time the evening star
Calls home the grazing steers, what time the wolves
Hark to the bleating lambs with hungry maws)
Sits on a rock and numbers o'er his herd.

Now was the very nick of time at hand,
And Aristaeus, with a mighty cry,
Scarce waiting till those weary limbs were couched,
Pounced on the man of eld, and bound him fast
With shackles as he lay.

Then in his turn,
Mindful of well-known wiles, doth Proteus change
In ever-varying and portentous shapes,
Monster, and flame, and water flowing free :
But when his magic failed him for escape,
Mastered and in his ancient form, he spake
With human lips : “ How now, presumptuous boy,
What askest thou of me ? Who bade thee come
To my domain ? ”

Then he : "Thou knowest well,
O Proteus, knowest of thyself, for naught
Can cheat thy knowledge : cease thou from thy wiles :
'Tis by the bidding of the gods I come
For my spent fortunes seeking words of sooth."

So far he spoke : and at his speech the Seer,
Wrought by a giant stress, with eyes that gleamed
The colour of wild ocean, gnashed his teeth,
And from his lips there poured the voice of fate.

"A god it is—none other than a god
Who visiteth his wrath upon thine head :
Grievous the fault whose penance thou dost thole.
Lo ! Orpheus—hapless Orpheus—ever cries
For vengeance—ay, a vengeance all too scant
On thee and thine, should Fate not hold her hand—
And with mad passion ever moans a bride
Torn from his arms. She—truly—she it was
Who on a day beside the river's brink
Foredoomed, poor sweetheart, to untimely death,

As headlong from thy hated grasp she fled,
Saw not the monstrous serpent in her path
Couched in lush grass, and guardian of the stream.

Then from her comrade choir of woodland nymphs
A wail went up and filled the topmost peaks,
A sound of weeping swept the Thracian hills,
Pangaea's height, and Rhesus' warlike realm :
Grief fell on Hebrus, and the Getan steppes,
And Attic Orithyia mourned aloud,
Whilst the lone Orpheus, by the empty shore,
To the sad music of his hollow shell,
Soothed his distempered love with songs of thee,
Thee, sweetest wife ! when first the daylight dawned,
Thee, sweetest wife ! when daylight passed away.

Then through the jaws of Taenarus he passed,
The cavernous gates of Dis ; the grove of gloom,
Wherein the horror of the darkness broods,
And stood before the powers of nether Hell,
With their dread King : and wrestled with the hearts
That know not pity for the prayers of men.

There, startled by his song, wan spectres flocked
Forth from the utmost deeps of Erebus,
Dim phantoms that had lost the light of day,
Swarming around like flights of myriad birds,
Who seek the sheltered wood when winter storm
Or chilly evening drives them from the hills :
Matrons and husbands, and the forms long dead
Of high-souled heroes, boys and spouseless girls,
And well-loved youths who in their parents' sight
Were laid to rest upon untimely pyres.

All these were they whom black Cocytus binds
With darkling ooze, with fringe of loathly reeds,
With sleepy waves that lap the loveless shore :
They whom abhorrent Styx for ever chains,
Girt with the ninefold fetters of its flood.

The very denizens of deepest Hell
Listened, astonished, to the strains he sang :
The Furies with their locks of livid snakes,
Grim Cerberus with triple mouth agape,
While the hushed whirlwind stayed Ixion's wheel.

And now, all hazards o'er, he journeys home,
 Eurydice, whom death had rendered up,
 Wending her way back to the airs of heaven,
 Follows his happy footsteps from afar,
 (For such the compact with the queen of Dis)
 When on the recklessness of love there fell
 A sudden folly—folly of all else
 Most meet for grace, could grace be found in Hell :
 He, pausing, turned, and on Eurydice,
 Once more his own, now near the brink of day,
 (O mindless mind ! O vanquished will !) he looked.

In that one moment all his toil was sped,
 Rent was the covenant of the ruthless King,
 And thrice the thunder crashed and crashed again
 Along the stagnant shores of black Averné.

Then came her voice : 'Orpheus, what hast thou
 done ?
 What fatal madness moved thee—we are lost—
 Lost—I—alas—and thou !

O cruel fates !

That call me back once more—now do mine eyes
Grow strangely faint, and shroud themselves in sleep.
Farewell, my Orpheus—I am borne away
And through the pall of vasty night I stretch
These poor weak hands towards thee—hands once
 thine own,
And never—never—to be thine again.'

She spake ; and suddenly she passed away
Like mists that mingle with the subtle air :
And he—with hands that sought in vain to grasp
Her fleeting shadow—he—with lips that longed
To say so much—so much—saw her no more.

Nor would the Ferryman of Death anew
Ply him across the bar of sleepy Styx.
What was there left to do? Where should he take
A life twice widowed of his love? What tears
Could move the shades? What prayers the gods?
 And yet

On Charon's bark she floats across the stream
In the chill clutch of death !

For seven moons—

So do they tell—he wept his heart away
By Strymon's lonely waters, where the cliffs
Tower to high heaven : and poured his grief aloud
Beneath the icy caverns in such song
As melted savage tigers, made the oaks
Follow his music—such a song, methinks,
As the sad nightingale wails for her young,
Beneath the darkling poplars—when her nest
Some churlish clown has lit upon and reft
Of all its tender fledglings : and she weeps
The livelong night ; and, niched amid the boughs,
In piteous burdens iterates her woe,
And with melodious sorrow fills the fields.

No lust of love or passion swayed his soul
As ever more in loneliness he roamed
The icy North, the snows of Tanäis,
The hoary wastes indissolubly bound

To a bleak wedlock with Rhipoean frosts,
Mourning aloud his lost Eurydice,
Mourning the gift of Pluto given in vain.

Till on a time the wanton dames of Thrace,
Deeming their womanhood too lightly scorned
By such a tribute, happened on the Youth,
The awful night of mystic sacrifice,
The night of orgies at the Bacchic shrine,
And tore his limbs, and strewed them o'er the plain.

Ay—but even then—as on its native tide
That comely head, rent from the marble neck,
Floated a-down mid-Hebrus, lo ! a voice,
A tongue that in the very chill of death,
Kept calling, calling, as the life-blood ebbed,
'Eurydice !—my poor Eurydice !'
And all along the stream 'Eurydice !'
'Eurydice !' the echoing margins wailed."

These were the words of Proteus, and forthwith
Headlong into the sea he cast himself.

And where he plunged he clove a wreath of foam
Beneath the whirling eddies of the wave.

But by the trembling youth Cyrene stayed,
And straightway spake : " Be of good cheer, my son,
For now thy soul is free from carking care :
This is the very secret of thy woe,
Hence comes it that the Nymphs, her comrade choir,
With whom erstwhile she danced in woodland deeps,
Have sent such hapless ruin on thy bees.
Thine be the task with humble hands to bear
The offerings of atonement : sue for peace ;
Kneel to the gentle Sisters of the glade,
And they shall stay their wrath, and grant thee grace.

But first in due array must I disclose
The manner of thine orisons. Choose thou
Four goodly bulls, excelling all the herd,
Such as on high Lycaeus' greenest sward
Thou pasturest to-day : and heifers four
Whose necks are virgin to the yoke of toil.

And by the temples of the woodland Nymphs
Four altars rear, whereon to slay the kine,
Shedding the sacred life-blood from their throats.

But leave the bodies of the victim steers
Amid the leafage of some lonely grove,
And afterward, when the ninth dawn unveils
The nascent day, send thou to Orpheus' shade
Poppies of Lethe as a funeral rite,
Slay a black sheep, and seek once more the grove.
Then shalt thou find Eurydice appeased,
And with a slaughtered heifer pay thy shrift."

With a fleet foot doth Aristaeus speed
To do his mother's bidding—seeks the shrines,
Builds the appointed altars—leads the steers,
Four goodly bulls excelling all the herd,
Heifers whose necks are virgin to the yoke :
And afterward, when the ninth dawn revealed
The nascent day, he sends the funeral gifts
To Orpheus' shade, and seeks once more the grove.

And there behold a sudden marvel greets
 The eyes of man, wondrous beyond all words ;
 For from the bodies of the victim steers
 From end to end the molten paunches teem,
 With buzz of bees, and through the riven bones
 There seethes a turmoil of tumultuous swarms,
 Swaying in endless clouds across the sky.
 Till on a treetop, mustering they mass
 And hang in clusters from the heavy boughs.

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This is the song of husbandry I made
 A song of fields, and flocks, and trees, what time
 Great Caesar hurled the thunderbolts of war,
 Across the deep Euphrates, and declared
 His sovereign statutes to a willing world,
 Cleaving a pathway to the heights of heaven.
 These were the days I nestled in the lap
 Of sweet Parthenope, and culled the flowers,
 The careless garlands of my modest toil,

I, Virgil, in the hey-day of my youth,
Who carolled with the country-folk, and piped
On jocund flute, O Tityrus, of thee,
Beneath broad canopies of beechen shade.

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